ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION: A COMPARISON OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE MOTIVATIONS OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS

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This study was developed to examine the motivations of individuals who chose alternative routes to teacher certification and what they believe were the strengths and weaknesses of their alternative certification preparation (ACP). Data accrued from this study were based on a 55-item online survey and participant information from an online focus group. The study compared the differences between general and special educators in regards to the motivating factors affecting the decision to become a teacher, remain a teacher, and in choosing a non-university-based ACP, as well as the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the ACP. The results from the survey suggest there are differences in the motivating factors affecting general and special educator’s decision to become a teacher and to remain a teacher. Additional survey results suggest there are no differences in the reason these two groups chose a non-university-based ACP. The results of the survey and the online focus group were comparable for these two groups. The remainder of this dissertation includes a review of literature related to teacher shortages and teacher preparation including alternative certification. Additionally, information on the results and analysis of the study are discussed, as well as recommendations for future research.
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by

Kathleen Ann Hogan
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have crossed my path during my lifetime and have been a pillar of support, wisdom, and encouragement from whom I have learned many things. I have appreciated all the prayers and support from these family members and friends, but there are a few that I believe deserve a personal recognition.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The issue of teacher shortages is a current dilemma facing teacher preparation programs. Alternative certification programs (ACP) came to the forefront of teacher preparation programs to help alleviate these shortages (Feistritzer, 2005; Humphrey, Wechsler, & Hough, 2008). Research shows that teachers who have completed an ACP have lower attrition rates than those who completed a traditional certification program (deBettencourt & Howard, 2004; Finn & Madigan, 2001; Klagholz, 2000; Sokal, Smith, & Mowat, 2003).

Since the 1980s, ACPs have had a place in the preparation of future teachers, but with the inception of the highly qualified mandate in the 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation these programs are becoming more widely utilized. According to Feistritzer (2007), all 50 states and the District of Columbia have at least one type of alternate route to teacher certification. During the 2005-2006 school year, approximately 59,000 individuals were certified to teach through an alternative program, accounting for one-third of all new general and special education teachers being employed annually.

Alternative certification programs prepare teachers in nontraditional ways by allowing individuals with bachelor’s degrees to enter the teaching profession (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; Roth & Lutz, 1986). According to Darling-Hammond (1990), alternative routes to teacher certification create the most viable option for midcareer entrants to access the teaching field. The issue of individuals who are changing careers to become teachers has caused great debate regarding the adequateness of alternative certification programs. The difference in the knowledge base and previous experiences that career changers bring to ACPs vary greatly from those teacher candidates who go through traditional teacher education programs. Teacher education
programs have made progress, but there are still many teachers who are entering teaching without receiving proper teacher education (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Fredlow, 2002; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

The issue of teacher shortages is a current dilemma facing teacher preparation programs. Current research states that not all newly certified teachers are entering the teaching field. In addition, many teacher education programs are not meeting the needs of future teachers. To adequately prepare for the projected 4.2 million teachers that will be teaching by the 2016 school year (Hussar & Bailey, 2007), institutions of higher education and ACPs will need to examine the motivations that affect an individual’s desire to teach in order to attract and retain competent professionals.

Purpose of Study

Alternative certification programs address the shortage of qualified and competent teachers (Bradshaw, 1998; Roth & Swail, 2000). Due to current economic conditions and the highly qualified mandate of No Child Left Behind, there may be an increase in alternatively certified teachers. This study examined the motivations of individuals who chose alternative routes to teacher certification and further clarified if those motivations have changed throughout the course of their teaching careers. Furthermore, the study focused on the strengths and weaknesses of their alternative certification preparation, as well as whether these educators felt adequately prepared to teach.
Research Questions

The research questions designed to guide this study are implied throughout the selected literature. Through these research questions, I gained a better understanding of what motivates people to change careers and choose the route selected. Results may help to ensure graduates of ACPs are adequately prepared to understand the needs of their future students. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the different motivating factors affecting the decision to become a general or special educator?

2. Since becoming a general or special educator, have the reasons for making this career choice changed? If yes, where do the differences occur between general and special educators?

3. What are the different motivating factors affecting general and special educators’ decisions to go through a non-university-based alternative certification program?

4. What do you perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the non-university-based alternative certification program?

Significance

There is an apparent need to fill teaching positions with qualified personnel. Teachers going through ACPs utilize skills from their previous careers thus making their preparation different from traditional teacher preparation programs. The information derived from the proposed study may be utilized to further enhance the curriculum of ACPs in order to assist in the recruitment and retention efforts of the ACP. Further, it is hoped that the findings of the
proposed study may be used to help guide the future development of effective alternative certification programs.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was that I used only one region in Texas’ database of current ACPs. An additional limitation was that I did not have direct access to the study participants, but was dependent upon a second party to facilitate the transmission of information to proposed participants. Utilizing an online focus group allows access to new technology but also brings with it the inherent limitations of the use of innovative methods.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms and acronyms that special education personnel often use and may be unfamiliar to the reader.

- Alternative certification program: Pre-service preparation allowing teachers to teach full-time, while getting paid and completing the specified requirements for teacher certification (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Individuals who opt for certification through this route already possess either a Bachelor’s degree or Master’s degree (Fenstermacher, 1990).

- Career changer: An individual who has at least a bachelor’s degree in a field other than education and has chosen to earn teaching credentials (Allen, 2007).

- Highly qualified: To be certified in the state where the individual is currently teaching or to have passed the state’s teacher examination, have training in the subject area in which the individual is teaching, and hold a license to teach (Wright, Wright, & Heath, 2004).
• Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The national law ensuring that states and public agencies provide children with disabilities the necessary early interventions, special education and related services (USDE, nd).

• Least restrictive environment (LRE): A legal mandate to educate students with disabilities in general education classrooms with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent possible (Wright & Wright, 2009).

• No Child Left Behind (NCLB): A legal statute stating that all children will have an equal opportunity to receive a high quality education (Wright, Wright, & Heath, 2004).

• Teacher certification: A license issued by a state to an individual who has met the requirements of the state to become a teacher (Serotkin, 2007).

• Traditional teacher education program (Traditional Certification Program): Pre-service preparation for individuals who do not already hold a bachelor’s degree and are interested in pursuing a career in teaching (Fenstermacher, 1990).
 CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A projected 54 million students will be enrolled in U.S. public PreK-12 schools by the year 2018 (United States Department of Education, USDE, 2009). With the large number of students entering the school system, it is imperative that we have properly trained teachers to educate our nation’s youth. The USDE (2005) predicts needing an additional four million teachers in the next few years due to retirement, attrition and growth in the national student population (Thomas, Friedman-Nimz, Mahlios, & O’Bien, 2005).

The issue of teacher shortages is a current dilemma facing teacher preparation programs. Alternative certification programs came to the forefront of teacher preparation to help alleviate these shortages (Feistritzer, 2005; Humphrey, Wechsler, & Hough, 2008; Simmons, 2005). The interest in alternative certification is due in part to (a) teacher shortages, (b) the content preparation of teachers, and (c) commitment of individuals entering the teaching profession (Holmes, 2001; Wayman, Foster, Mantle-Bromley, & Wilson, 2003). Teacher education programs have made progress, but there are still many teachers who are going into teaching without receiving proper training (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Fredlow, 2002; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1997).

Literature dating back as early as 1980 and as recent as 2009 was explored in order to provide an in-depth coverage of issues related to teacher preparation as well as alternative certification programs. The literature databases used were ERIC via EBSCO Host and the Professional Development Collection with search criterion including alternative teacher certification, career changers, teacher preparation, and teacher shortages. Additionally, monographs, mini-library series and resources gleaned from the original identified sources were
used. The purpose of this literature review is to provide information regarding the effects of teacher shortages on the development of alternative certification programs. Additionally, the routes to teacher certification are identified and a review of the issues associated with teacher preparation is discussed. Furthermore, information regarding the history of alternative certification programs, the characteristics, and components of effective teacher education programs, both traditional and alternative, are presented. Finally, an examination of the motivations of individuals who have decided to change careers and enter the field of education are addressed.

Teacher Shortages

Teachers are neither remaining in education nor entering the field because of pay (Roth & Swail, 2000; USDE, 2004) and professionalism (Roth & Swail, 2000). Teacher shortages have been impacted by the need for additional classroom teachers due to the growth in student enrollment and smaller class sizes (Felter, 1997; May, Katsinas, & Moore, 2003; USDE, 2004). For these reasons, among others, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, nd) was created to help raise the level of teacher preparation and the perception of teaching as a profession that is equal to lawyers, doctors, and other certified personnel.

An unstable teaching workforce (Felter, 1997; May et al., 2003) has been related to national teacher shortages. Moreover, teacher shortages have been noted to be due to teacher turnover. The highest turnover for teachers occurs in the areas of special education, math, and science (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001; Murname, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991; Rumberger, 1987). Age has been identified as one factor attributed to teachers leaving the field; younger teachers are more likely to leave the field than are older professionals.
Teacher turnover declines through mid-career and rises during retirement age (Bobbitt, Leich, Whitener, & Lynch, 1994; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Mailsin, 1998; Hafner & Owings, 1991; Ingersoll, 2001; Murname et al., 1991). Additional factors affecting teachers leaving the field include (a) an excessively heavy workload, (b) not being fully certified in the area they are teaching, (c) too much paperwork, and (d) large caseloads of students with multiple disabilities (Office of Special Education Programs, OSEP, 2001). Finally, high teacher retirement is affecting the number of teachers leaving the teaching field (Felter, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001; May et al., 2003; USDE, 2004).

Teacher attrition also impacts teacher shortages (Felter, 1997; May et al., 2003; USDE, 2004). Alternatively certified teachers tend to have lower attrition rates than traditionally certified teachers (deBettencourt & Howard, 2004; Finn & Madigan, 2001; Harris, Camp, & Adkison, 2003; Klagholz, 2000; Sokal et al., 2003; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001). One reason alternatively certified teachers stay in the field longer is because of the program structure of alternative programs. The program structure includes the ability to (a) develop competency through challenging content and pedagogical coursework, (b) develop professional relationships with mentors, (c) develop relationships with cohort members, and (d) focus on themselves and their tasks at the beginning of their program so by the end of their programming the focus has shifted to their students and the teaching/learning process (Jorissen, 2003; Thomas et al., 2005).

Special Education Shortages

Teacher shortages, especially among special educators, are causing alarm among many educational leaders (Billingsley & McCleskey, 2004; Brownell, Sindelar, Bishop, Langley, & Seo, 2002; deBettencourt & Howard, 2004; McCleskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004; Pipho, 1998).
Special education teacher shortages are chronic and expected to worsen, especially in urban and remote rural areas (Brownell, 2005). Shortages among special education teachers are due to having an inadequate supply of highly qualified, certified teachers, rather than the unavailability of individuals willing to work with this population (Boe, Cook, Bobbitt, & Terhanian, 1998; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001). Additional shortages of quality special education teachers result from the increase in (a) special education caseloads (Billingsley & McCleskey, 2004; deBettencourt & Howard, 2004), (b) the number of students who receive special education services (deBettencourt & Howard, 2004), and (c) teachers who leave the field (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997; deBettencourt & Howard, 2004).

Brownell (2005) notes that teacher shortages have actually increased since the inception of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It has been noted that special education teacher shortages are higher than in math and science. Across the nation, the supply of qualified teachers has been noted as more of a problem than teacher attrition (Brownell, 2005). The shortage of fully certified special education teachers has received national attention due to the highly qualified mandate of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The NCLB Act (2001) mandate has two possibilities in the field of special education: (a) it can increase the number of certified special education teachers who work with special needs students, or (b) it can heighten the shortage of special education teachers (Billingsley & McCleskey, 2004; deBettencourt & Howard, 2004).

The needs of special education students are tremendous. Because these needs are varying and success may not become evident right away, special education teachers need a support system in place. Research notes that special education teachers often feel isolated and have higher rates of burnout and attrition (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001; Wasburn-
Moses & Rosenberg, 2008). Furthermore, special education teachers feel they are lacking appropriate knowledge and skills in using technology, accommodating diverse students’ learning needs, and interpreting standardized test results (OSEP, 2001).

The literature has identified several strategies to assist in retaining quality special education teachers in the classroom (OSEP, 2001). The best way to decrease the shortage of special education teachers is to adequately prepare qualified applicants and provide teachers with sufficient salaries and benefits. Another strategy is to encourage experienced teachers to stay in the school districts as mentors or part-time teachers. An additional strategy is to examine policies to see if a reduction in paperwork can occur to help alleviate the stress on special education teachers. A fourth strategy identified in the literature is to provide more training in areas in which teachers consider themselves weak. A final suggestion is to work with school districts to continue professional development that meets the needs of special education teachers, including time for teachers to implement what they have learned and receive feedback on the implementation.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation of both general and special educators is an area that is continuously changing. The issue of preparing personnel to enter the classroom is a difficult task due to, the changing demographics and the growing number of school reforms being initiated (Bullock, Ellis, & Wilson, 1994; Council for Exceptional Children, 1993). The decision to rethink the structure and practices of teacher education have arisen from (a) the complaints of graduates from teacher education programs and (b) school administrators and parents who have found irrelevance in teacher preparation programs related to the reality of teaching in a PreK-12 school

To alleviate the issue of preparing highly qualified teachers, there are several methods through which individuals can receive teacher certification. Those who do not hold a bachelor’s degree can go through a traditional teacher preparation program at the college or university level. Individuals who hold a bachelor’s degree may go through one of two types of alternative certification. One is to take post baccalaureate classes at a college or university and start teaching after coursework is completed and teaching credentials have been received (Fenstermacher, 1990). A second type of alternative certification program is a non-university-based ACP, usually consisting of short summer programs and the ability to teach the following school year and receive pay while completing teacher credential requirements (Fenstermacher, 1990; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). The latter type of ACP provides limited teacher preparation by modifying or eliminating certain coursework required of traditional teacher education students (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Darling-Hammond (1990) states that alternative certification routes include flexible schedules with specific coursework targeted in a particular area.

Comparison of Traditional and Alternative Certification Programs

When individuals are determining which route to teacher certification is best, there are several features that may be taken into account. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE; 2008) identifies several items to consider when choosing an effective teacher preparation program. Included are whether or not the program offers a foundation in liberal arts and teaching disciplines, as well as if the program is designed using subject matter specific standards. Additional considerations include whether or not the institution
provides (a) opportunities to learn how to teach under a variety of veteran teachers, and (b) the resources necessary to support the programs offered. Individuals should also be aware of whether or not teacher candidates are receiving knowledge of the most effective teaching strategies.

Further, the percentage of graduates who pass the state licensing exam and how the institution seeks and uses feedback from graduates, principals, and department chairs are considerations. Examining the similarities and differences (see Table 1) in programs may also be helpful when determining which will best fit the needs of the individual.

When examining alternative and traditional certification programs, it is also important to identify which better prepares future teachers. The literature discusses the debate regarding whether alternative or traditional programs are more effective. Studies have been conducted to examine the areas in which traditionally certified and alternatively certified teachers felt most prepared to teach (see Table 2).

Table 1

*Comparison of Alternative and Traditional Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model Alternative Certification Programs</th>
<th>Typical Traditional Teacher Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>Teaching begins while completing teacher preparation (Humphrey, Wechsler, &amp; Hough, 2008; Rosenberg &amp; Sindelar, 2001; Walsh &amp; Jacobs, 2007; Wasburn-Moses &amp; Rosenberg, 2008)</td>
<td>Students complete coursework and student teaching before beginning to teach (Fenstermacher, 1990; Johnson, Birkeland, &amp; Peske, 2005; Walsh &amp; Jacobs, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amount of Coursework</strong></td>
<td>Compressed Schedule (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Mickulecky, Shkodriani, &amp; Wilner, 2004; Walsh &amp; Jacobs, 2007)</td>
<td>Varies between 9 and 45 credit hours of coursework, most programs between 30 and 45 credit hours (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Walsh &amp; Jacobs, 2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Coursework</th>
<th>Model Alternative Certification Programs</th>
<th>Typical Traditional Teacher Preparation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Mentor assigned to provide intensive support (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Johnson, Birkeland, &amp; Peske, 2005; USDE, 2004; Walsh &amp; Jacobs, 2007)</td>
<td>Varies according to district or IHE (Darwin &amp; Palmer, 2009; Jacobi, 1991; Walsh &amp; Jacobs, 2007)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Adapted from Walsh & Jacobs, 2007, p. 20)

Table 2

Teacher Perspectives on their Preparedness to Enter the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alternative Certification Programs</th>
<th>Traditional Preparation Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management (Humphrey, Wechsler, &amp; Hough, 2008; Jelmberg, 1996; Miller, McKenna, &amp; McKenna, 1998; Wayman, Foster, Mantle-Bromley, &amp; Wilson, 2003)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with school personnel (Billingsley, 2001; Cegelka &amp; Doorlag, 1995; Sindelar, Daunic, &amp; Rennells, 2004)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning appropriate instruction (Billingsley, 2001; Cegelka &amp; Doorlag, 1995; Sindelar, Daunic, &amp; Rennells, 2004)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting student learning (Billingsley, 2001; Darling-Hammond, Chung, Fredlow, 2002; Sindelar, Daunic, &amp; Rennells, 2004)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing appropriate instruction (Cegelka &amp; Doorlag, 1995; Humphrey, Wechsler, &amp; Hough, 2008; Sindelar, Daunic, &amp; Rennells, 2004; Wayman, Foster, Mantle-Bromley, &amp; Wilson, 2003)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 2 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alternative Certification Programs</th>
<th>Traditional Preparation Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching critical thinking (Darling-Hammond, Chung, Fredlow, 2002; Sindelar, Daunic, &amp; Rennells, 2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching social development (Darling-Hammond, Chung, Fredlow, 2002; Sindelar, Daunic, &amp; Rennells, 2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology (Darling-Hammond, Chung, Fredlow, 2002)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding learners needs (Darling-Hammond, Chung, Fredlow, 2002; Humphrey, Wechsler, &amp; Hough, 2008)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(+ = participants feel prepared)

Results of further studies show that alternatively certified teachers and traditionally certified teachers are similar, but alternatively certified teachers generally focus more on instructional management interventions (Martin & Shoho, 1994). Additionally, since alternatively certified teachers do not follow the same route to teacher certification as traditionally certified teachers, there is more likelihood that their attitudes will not change during the course of the program (Chan, 1999; Sokal et al., 2003).

Redesigning Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education reform has become an important realization due to the development of teaching standards and the highly qualified mandate of NCLB (Darling-Hammond, 2005). According to Title II of the Higher Education Act, each state is required to develop a report card for its teacher education programs. With the passing of this legislation, teacher education programs are given a classification based on standardized test scores and graduate performance (Bauer, Johnson, & Sapon, 2004). According to Roth and Swail (2000), The Higher Education Act of 1998 was reauthorized to require colleges and state governments to report information regarding teacher quality.
According to the literature, the most critical component of a solid education is good teaching (Roth & Swail, 2000; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Teacher preparation programs need to develop their curriculum around the competencies that have been identified as essential for teachers (Dingle, Falvey, Givner, & Haager, 2004). According to Hawley (1990), there are several strategies that can be used to improve teacher education programs. One is to recruit and retain individuals who have a breadth of knowledge and those who have the qualities that are important to quality teaching. Secondly, teacher education programs must increase the knowledge and the expertise of the future educators who are being recruited. Finally, there needs to be motivation to work harder and to enhance professional expertise provided to all teachers.

When redesigning a teacher education program to fit the current needs of students, several areas of teacher preparation should be addressed (see Table 3).

Table 3

**Characteristics of Effective Teacher Education Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a reflective practitioner</td>
<td>CEC, 2009; Korthagen, Loughran, &amp; Russell, 2006; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core curriculum coursework (multicultural competence, standards of excellence, effective educational practices, social skills instruction, and classroom management)</td>
<td>Hardman, 2009; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive field experiences</td>
<td>Bauer, Johnson, &amp; Saponia, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on the conceptual change about diverse learners</td>
<td>Rosenberg &amp; Sindelar, 2001; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, &amp; Moon, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional planning, doing the teaching, and the ability to link these relationships</td>
<td>CEC, 2009; Korthagen, Loughran, &amp; Russell, 2006; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and skills based on validated and replicable instruction practices</td>
<td>Bauer, Johnson, &amp; Saponia, 2004; Hardman, 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
To meet the ever-changing needs of future teachers and students, teacher education programs will need to be reformed. Licensing standards have been strengthened to ensure that teachers are able to teach all students regardless of academic ability or cultural backgrounds and that they are able to meet the ever changing content standards (Darling-Hammond, 2005). It is important for teacher preparation programs to provide content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing academic support and flexibility</td>
<td>Bauer, Johnson, &amp; Sapona, 2004; Patton, Williams, Floyd, &amp; Cobb, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing and expecting continuous professional development and personal growth</td>
<td>Hardman, 2009; Korthagen, Loughran, &amp; Russell, 2006; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing clear and explicit reasoning behind pedagogical reasoning</td>
<td>Brownell, 2005; Korthagen, Loughran, &amp; Russell, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing sufficient subject matter knowledge in specific disciplines</td>
<td>Bauer, Johnson, &amp; Sapona, 2004; Dingle, Falvey, Givner, &amp; Haager, 2004; Hardman, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills to adapt curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students</td>
<td>Bauer, Johnson, &amp; Sapona, 2004; CEC, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Dingle, Falvey, Givner, &amp; Haager, 2004; Hardman, 2009; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-centered instruction</td>
<td>Goodlad, 1990; Hardman, 2009; Thurlow, 2000; Vinovskis, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the characteristics and the needs of their students</td>
<td>Ball, Hill, &amp; Bass, 2005; Humphrey, Wechsler, &amp; Hough, 2008; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working within a common curriculum and accountability system</td>
<td>Goodlad, 1990; Hardman, 2009; Thurlow, 2000; Vinovskis, 1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
coursework and experiences that will foster organization of learning environments and instruction in the future teacher’s classroom (Bauer et al., 2004).

**Comparison of General and Special Education Programs**

Preparation of quality teachers in both general and special education is important to the success of future students. Table 4 compares the current characteristics of teacher preparation programs for general and special education teachers.

Table 4

*Comparison of the Current Characteristics in General and Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic/Feature</th>
<th>General Education</th>
<th>Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coherent program vision and blending of theory (Brownell, Ross, Colon, &amp; McCallum, 2003)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of discipline/classroom management (Brownell, Ross, Colon, &amp; McCallum, 2003; Humphrey, Wechsler, &amp; Hough, 2008; Jelmberg, 1996; Miller, McKenna, &amp; McKenna, 1998; Wayman, Foster, Mantle-Bromley, &amp; Wilson, 2003)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on assessment, procedural matters, and legal foundations (CEC, 2009; Dingle, Falvey, Givner, &amp; Haager, 2004; Kozleski, Pugach, &amp; Yinger, 2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on diverse populations (Brownell, Ross, Colon, &amp; McCallum, 2003; Rosenberg &amp; Sindelar, 2001; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, &amp; Moon, 1998)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate research-based practices (Bauer, Johnson, &amp; Sapona, 2004)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of field experiences, coursework, and case studies (Bauer, Johnson, &amp; Sapona, 2004; Brownell, Ross, Colon, &amp; McCallum, 2003; Darling-Hammond &amp; Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Kozleski, Pugach, &amp; Yinger, 2002; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1997; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004; Wilson, Floden, &amp; Ferrini-Mundy, 2001)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 4 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic/Feature</th>
<th>General Education</th>
<th>Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring (Cleveland, 2003; deBettencourt &amp; Howard, 2004; Hawley, 1990; Humphrey, Wechsler, &amp; Hough, 2008; Kozleski, Pugach, &amp; Yinger, 2002; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1997; Selke &amp; Fero, 2005; Wasburn-Moses &amp; Rosenberg, 2008; Wilson, Floden, &amp; Ferrini-Mundy, 2001)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy skills including modeling and reflection (Brownell, Ross, Colon, &amp; McCallum, 2003; CEC, 2009; Korthagen, Loughran, &amp; Russell, 2006; Kozleski, Pugach, &amp; Yinger, 2002; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, &amp; Neel, 2004; Wilson, Floden, &amp; Ferrini-Mundy, 2001)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program evaluation (Brownell, Ross, Colon, &amp; McCallum, 2003; CEC, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong partnerships between universities and schools (Darling-Hammond &amp; Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Gable &amp; McLaughlin, 1993; Kozleski, Pugach, &amp; Yinger, 2002; Wilson, Floden, &amp; Ferrini-Mundy, 2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-specific knowledge (Bauer, Johnson, &amp; Sapona, 2004; Brownell, Ross, Colon, &amp; McCallum, 2003; Dingle, Falvey, Givner, &amp; Haager, 2004; Hardman, 2009)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basics of learning, development, and curriculum (Darling-Hammond &amp; Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Walsh &amp; Jacobs, 2007)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(+ = research has identified the characteristic in the particular certification area)

**Issues in Teacher Preparation**

Schools and colleges are under fire to meet certain requirements (Brownell, 2005). With the passage of the NCLB Act (2001), all instructors of core subjects must be highly qualified. In order for teachers to meet this requirement, it is the teacher education programs’ responsibility to equip future teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach to the high standards required of students, and to effectively teach students with a vast array of differences (USDE, 2004).
The current debate regarding teacher preparation focuses on the best way to prepare, license, and hire quality teachers. One argument is that future educators should focus on an extensive pre-service preparation program which entails rigorous, highly enforced certification requirements (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001). According to Peske and associates (2001), this focus will discourage future educators who (a) decide later in life that they want to become teachers, (b) are career changers, or (c) want to teach for only part of their lifelong career. Those who oppose ACPs want to utilize different routes to teaching and deregulate teacher certification (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; Peske et al., 2001). This view provides no certainty or assurance that teachers will be held to high standards or those that demonstrate mastery will be able to keep their jobs (Peske et al., 2001). The problem with both views is that neither provides the support needed to improve. Teacher preparation programs must be aware of the issues regarding these programs in order to properly educate and prepare future teachers.

One particular issue in teacher preparation is the research-to-practice gap (Bauer et al., 2004; Greenwood, 2001; Korthagen et al., 2006; Sindelar & Brownell, 2001). According to Korthagen and associates (2006), the issue of research-to-practice has failed to change what is happening in our schools and universities. Today, even after 20 years of teacher education reform, we still have not closed the gap between research and practice. This research-to-practice gap is one issue that continues to be addressed in teacher education programs. Urgency to close the research-to-practice gap has increased in recent years due to unprecedented demand regarding the high quality of teachers without the research base in teacher education to support it (Bauer et al., 2004).
Traditional teacher education programs have been characterized by their strong emphasis on theory, often relayed through lectures (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Korthagen et al., 2006). The utilization of lectures among teacher preparation programs is being challenged due to its inadequacies and limitations (Korthagen et al., 2006). Additionally, Wideen and associates (1998) noted that the emphasis on theory is inadequate. The use of lectures to relay educational theory needs to be changed in order for future teachers to learn appropriate teaching techniques (Korthagen et al., 2006; Stofflett & Stoddart, 1994).

According to Monahan, Marino, and Miller (2000), attitudes toward inclusion must be examined in teacher preparation programs. Teacher education programs need to bring awareness to teacher attitudes regarding inclusion (Cegelka & Doorlag, 1995; D’ Alonzo, Giordano, & Cross, 1996; Dingle et al., 2004; Monahan et al., 2000). Teacher preparation programs are responsible for providing the knowledge and skills necessary to teach all students, regardless of their culture or academic and behavioral needs. Teacher education programs for both general and special education teachers have been challenged since the least restrictive environment (LRE) mandate of IDEA. The LRE mandate has increased the number of students being educated in the general education classroom (Dingle et al., 2004; USDE, 2002). Further, a requirement of IDEA states that general education teachers must receive the knowledge and skills necessary to educate students with disabilities and to work collaboratively with special education teachers (Dingle et al., 2004; Wigle & Wilcox, 1997). Teacher education programs must address the need for general and special education teachers to share the responsibility of educating students with disabilities. To achieve this teacher education programs must provide both general and special educators with the appropriate knowledge and skills to work with students with disabilities (Dingle et al., 2004).
Teaching Standards

Accreditation of teacher education programs comes from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2008). NCATE is recognized by the USDE as the official accrediting body for institutions that prepare professionals working in schools. The central theme of NCATE’s mission is accountability and improvement of teacher education programs. NCATE is responsible for determining whether teacher education programs meet the standards for teachers and other school personnel preparation (NCATE, 2008).

For a teacher preparation program to be accredited through NCATE, the program must follow certain criteria. The teacher education program must ensure new teachers receive the necessary content, pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills to create a supportive environment for student learning. Additionally, the program must administer multiple assessments to determine whether teacher candidates meet professional standards. Furthermore, these programs should prepare educators to teach a diverse group of students, and how to integrate technology into their instruction. Finally, NCATE requires teacher education programs to encourage reflective practice, professional development, and collaboration (NCATE, 2008).

NCATE (2008) requires that students graduating from teacher education programs must be able to teach students according to the standards set by particular professional associations and states. Additionally, teachers must be able to explain their instructional choices based on research and apply effective teaching methods to a diverse set of students. It is expected that all teachers who attend an accredited teacher education program will have (a) a broad liberal arts education, (b) an in-depth study of the particular subject they will be teaching, (c) a foundation in professional and pedagogical knowledge, and (d) ongoing assessments of competence.

According to NCATE (2008), these characteristics fall under six standards: (a) candidate
knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions, (b) assessment system and unit evaluation, (c) field experiences, (d) diversity, (e) faculty qualifications, performance, and development, and (f) unit governance and resources.

In 2003, NCATE began requiring alternative teacher education programs to be part of their reporting system (Mickulecky, Shkodriani, & Wilner, 2004). As ACPs develop, they must be cognizant of the appropriate standards required by NCATE. NCATE has based its standards on the idea that all children can and should learn. Once a teacher education program has been accredited, individuals looking at teacher preparation programs will know that graduates of the program have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work with all students (NCATE, 2008). Few ACPs are NCATE accredited. Alternative certification programs that are based on NCATE accreditation most likely will be university-based.

In 1987, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was created after the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy’s Task Force on Teaching released *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (NBPTS, nd). The release of *A Nation Prepared* initiated the NBPTS to issue a policy statement entitled *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*, which included core standards for teachers such as (a) teachers need to: believe that all students can learn, treat all students equal, understand how students develop and learn, and be able to respect the diversity of students; (b) teachers need to know the core areas in which they are teaching and how to teach those subjects to students by using diverse instructional strategies; (c) teachers need to be responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, deliver instruction effectively, and know how to engage students in a disciplined and organized environment; (d) teachers must be able to think systematically and learn from their experiences; and (e) teachers must be members of learning communities (NCATE, 2008).
Research shows several overlapping standards that are needed by both general and special education teachers, thus the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC; 1992) developed a set of common standards (see Table 5). As of March 2009, INTASC was working to revamp the core standards set in 1992 in order to meet the changing needs of the 21st century (INTASC, 2009).

Table 5

**INTASC Standards (INTASC, 1992)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Number</th>
<th>Standard Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Understand the concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Create learning experiences that make subject matter meaningful for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Understand how children learn and develop, while providing learning opportunities that support their personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Understand how students differ and be able to adapt instruction to meet needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Use a variety of teaching strategies that encourage student’s development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Understand individual and group motivation which encourages positive self interaction, active engagement, and self-motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Use their knowledge of communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration and supportive interaction in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Plan instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, and curriculum goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Understand assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure student development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Become reflective practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Foster relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has placed rigorous, national, performance-based standards that are related to the knowledge and skills that special education teachers should have (Bauer et al., 2004; Otis-Wilborn & Winn, 2000). These standards are now aligned with Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards (Bauer et al., 2004). In addition, NCATE has adopted the standards developed by the CEC, which set the bar for teacher education in special education (Peck et al., 2004).
CEC’s standards (see Table 6) include a common core for all special educators and specialized standards for specific areas of special education (CEC, 2009).

Table 6

**CEC Standards for Beginning Teachers (CEC, 2009)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEC Standards for Beginning Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Foundations of special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Development and characteristics of students with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Individual learning differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Instructional strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Learning environments and social interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Instructional planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Professional and ethic practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under each of these core standards there are knowledge and skills statements which are recommended for all beginning special education teachers, regardless of the disability. CEC standards expect that every beginning special education teacher will (a) possess appropriate pedagogical knowledge and skills, (b) hold a bachelor’s degree from an accredited teacher preparation program, and (c) have appropriate core academic subject knowledge. Additionally, beginning special education teachers must have a solid base in the liberal arts, subject matter content, and individualized pedagogical content, which is the heart of special education (CEC, 2009). Furthermore, according to Goodlad (1990), teacher education programs must have a conception of what is expected of schools and the conditions needed to educate students.
Alternative Certification Programs

Since the 1980s, alternative certification programs have had a place in the preparation of future teachers, but with the inception of No Child Left Behind’s (NCLB; 2001) highly qualified mandate, these programs are becoming more widely cited. Currently, 50 states are implementing some form of ACP (National Center for Alternative Certification, 2007) accounting for more than 600 programs (Alternative Choices, 2005; National Center for Alternative Certification, 2007). According to Feistritzer (2007), during the 2005-2006 school year, approximately 59,000 individuals were certified through an ACP. Additional researchers found that approximately 12%-15% of all new teachers are prepared and licensed through alternative certification programs (Feistritzer & Chester, 2003; Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008). The National Center for Alternative Certification (2007) has found fewer than 50% of alternatively certified teachers would not have pursued their certification if ACPs were not available.

History

The 1980s were a time of teacher shortages. In order to respond to this crisis, ACPs were developed (Feistritzer, 2005; Humphrey et al., 2008; Simmons, 2005). It was believed that one way to overcome the teacher shortage problem was to reduce teacher certification requirements by providing alternative routes to certification (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Simmons, 2005). According to Johnson and Birkeland (2003), ACPs offered those interested in pursuing a career in teaching, and had already received a degree, to take a route with less pre-service preparation than the traditional route to certification. Additionally, the development of ACPs would assist in improving the quality of teachers by attracting highly skilled professionals who had developed real-world experiences in certain subject areas (Legler, 2002; Simmons, 2005).
In 1983, New Jersey offered the first alternative route to teacher certification (Feistritzer & Chester, 2003; USDE, 2004; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). The program in New Jersey was developed by the head of teacher preparation and licensing, Leo Klagholz. Individuals who (a) were interested in teaching, (b) had high college grade point averages, (c) received a baccalaureate degree in a teaching subject, and (d) passed subject tests were admitted into the program. By the end of 1983, eight states offered ACPs (Feistritzer & Chester, 2003; Thomas et al., 2005) and by 1987, 40 states had begun to offer these alternative routes to certification (Feistritzer & Chester, 2003).

In 1984, California began offering an alternative route to teacher certification which would assist in bringing highly skilled professionals into the classroom. This was achieved by lessening the course load of a traditional teacher preparation program and introducing future teachers to mentoring and induction activities to prepare them for teaching (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007).

Growth of Alternative Certification Programs

In response to NCLB, among other reasons, states began to initiate ACPs at a faster pace. Additionally, there was an increasing concern that traditional routes were not attracting quality and diverse candidates and there was dissatisfaction and impatience with traditional teacher education programs. The call for an increase in quality ACPs proved to be popular by all involved (Feistritzer, 2005; Feistritzer & Chester, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

The literature found several reasons for the growing interest regarding ACPs. One reason is that these programs are promoted and supported by influential people (Fenstermacher, 1990; Hawley, 1990; Humphrey et al., 2008; USDE, 2004). There has been opposition to the
endorsement of influential individuals because ACPs may place unqualified, uncertified teachers in classrooms where students are the neediest (Humphrey et al., 2008). Several additional factors are attributed to the growth of ACPs: (a) rising age of current teachers, (b) reductions in class-size, and (c) traditional programs having difficulty attracting quality minority candidates through traditional programs (Alternative Choices, 2005; Glazerman, Seif, & Baxter, 2008).

Components

It is a common belief that ACPs are working to improve novice teachers and provide them the tools to become lifelong learners (Caffarella & Barnett, 1994; Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008). Candidates who are alternatively certified have a need for active, applicable learning and already possess the skills to find and solve complex problems (Caffarella & Barnett, 1994; Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008).

According to Cafarella and Barnett (1994) alternative programs should take into account candidates’ (a) life experiences, (b) preference to be actively involved in their learning, (c) desire to be connected to others’ learning and development, and (d) multiple responsibilities that come with being an adult. Additionally, ACPs need to make certain there is buy-in on the candidate’s part. Furthermore, ACPs need to create richer learning opportunities than traditional teacher education programs offer (Hawley, 1990; Little 1990). Richer learning opportunities can be achieved by providing extensive preparation before and continue throughout teaching (Selke & Fero, 2005). Simmons (2005) identified the importance of including an orientation session for candidates which would include terminology, curriculum, and materials that are used in the classroom, as well as providing information reviewing school policies and procedures, disciplinary procedures, and grading and assessment practices.
Many ACPs require their candidates to pass a rigorous screening process (e.g. Cleveland, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Feistritzer & Chester, 2003; Haycock, 1998; Legler, 2002; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; Roth & Swail, 2000; Selke & Fero, 2005; Simmons, 2005; Thomas et al., 2005). Candidates can be admitted into an ACP several ways: (a) the program could have a selection process that helps identify worthy applicants, (b) some programs require their candidates to already have a job in place before they apply to the programs, or (c) having the alternative program work directly with a school district while trying to fill vacancies (USDE, 2004). It is important that candidates who enter an ACP have the necessary knowledge, skills, and personality to quickly become effective teachers (USDE, 2004). Additionally, it is important for alternative route programs to blend both theory and practice to provide the necessary tools to survive in the classroom (Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008). Preparation should include training in instruction, management, curriculum, and working with diverse students, lesson planning, and evaluation procedures (Selke & Fero, 2005). ACPs need to provide their candidates with knowledge regarding (a) specific content, (b) how students and content fit together, and (c) how to teach specific content (Ball et al., 2005; Humphrey et al., 2008).

Training should also include classroom organization skills, communication strategies, paperwork completion techniques, resources for support and collaboration, and stress management (Cohen, Gale, & Meyer, 2005; Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008). Allowing candidates to build a blue-print for organizing and managing their classrooms, as well as providing candidates with a framework for scheduling and monitoring student activities, preparing lesson plans, and parent contact letters are additional effective items that can be provided during pre-service training (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Wasburn-
Moses & Rosenberg, 2008). Providing immediate classroom applications, facilitating collaboration between candidate and school, and adhering to professional standards and guidelines have also been identified as characteristics of effective alternative programs (Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008).

Extensive coursework is a fourth component of effective ACPs (deBettencourt & Howard, 2004; Humphrey et al., 2008). Coursework for candidates in an ACP should be well sequenced so that candidates receive the appropriate coursework that is relevant to the challenges they may be facing (Humphrey et al., 2008). It is important to make the coursework relevant to all unique needs of the candidates, those who have worked in education and those who have not, and those working in supportive and non-supportive schools.

Additionally, coursework should focus on specific skills and knowledge that are associated with teaching different subjects (Humphrey et al., 2008). Coursework that is specific and assists the candidate with the trials and tribulations of teaching also need to be included (Cleveland, 2003). Humphrey and associates found that teachers who were involved in practical courses which focused on specific areas for teaching a curriculum and/or handling classroom management were the most helpful. Additionally, it was found that individuals who could take the coursework and connect it with prior knowledge received the most benefit. Furthermore, participants said that coursework that was practical and focused on specific knowledge and skills such as subject matter content (Humphrey et al., 2008; Legler, 2002; Simmons, 2005), pedagogy (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Humphrey et al., 2008; Legler, 2002; Simmons, 2005), classroom management (Humphrey et al., 2008; Legler, 2002; Simmons, 2005), educational theory and child development (Humphrey et al., 2008), were also helpful.
Additionally, research cites the importance of participating in a field experience prior to becoming certified (Legler, 2002; Simmons, 2005). Field experiences give teaching candidates the knowledge base for practice in the field as well as an orientation toward teaching (Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008). Field-based experiences need to be innovative and utilize distance learning techniques (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; Sindelar & Marks, 1993; Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008).

Career Changers

Many individuals who enter ACPs are changing careers. According to Darling-Hammond (1990), alternative routes to teacher certification create the most viable option for midcareer entrants to begin teaching. Alternative certification programs need to focus on these second-career teachers’ backgrounds, motives, and images of teaching. Furthermore, ACPs need to focus on the competencies individuals bring to the table and how to transfer previous competencies into the classroom (Tigchelaar, Brouwer, & Korthagen, 2008).

Choosing Alternative Certification Programs

Career-changers are drawn to ACPs because they are fast, inexpensive, practical, convenient, and offer job placement (Johnson et al., 2005). Additionally, alternatively certified teachers found that being the teacher of record and being able to work and earn a salary while completing requirements for the program were incentives to go through an alternative route to teacher certification. Furthermore, ACPs attract career changers who are able to utilize their prior knowledge and skills in the classroom (Humphrey et al., 2008).
Alternative certification programs attract older, nontraditional candidates who have decided they want to change-careers and become teachers. The profile of a career-changer in education is female, 30 years or older (Crow, Levine, & Nager, 1990; Morton, Williams, & Brindley, 2006; Murname et al., 1991). Further research has found that ACPs are likely to attract more males, individuals over 25 years of age, diverse individuals, and individuals who have had experience in the business world (Edelen-Smith & Sileo, 1996; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; Roth & Lutz, 1986).

Many candidates believe they have natural teaching abilities as well as learned skills which make the traditional teacher preparation program unnecessary (Simmons, 2005). Individuals coming from previous careers felt they were able to incorporate specialized, practical and real world knowledge into instruction. In addition, they felt they possessed effective interpersonal skills and possessed management and organizational skills (Salyer, 2003). Salyer (2003) found that individuals chose to go through alternative teacher certification because (a) they have had prior experience with teaching and/or training, (b) jobs were easier to come by, and/or (c) they wanted to share their passion of the subject matter with others.

Research has identified several reasons why individuals choose to begin teaching after pursuing other careers (e.g., the economy forcing many companies to reduce employment [Johnson et al., 2005]; the shift in the concept of career [Darling-Hammond, 1990]. Many career-changers who decide to go into teaching are motivated by altruistic factors (Hawley, 1990). Teachers who are alternatively certified for altruistic reasons often have had little exposure to contemporary classrooms and are disillusioned by the realities and difficulties associated with teaching.
Additionally, research shows that individuals want to be a positive influence on children (Salyer, 2003; Thomas et al., 2005). Other career changers come into teaching because they feel teaching would be more meaningful (Johnson et al., 2005). Additionally, others go into teaching due to a lack of alternative career choices (Thomas et al., 2005). Further reasons include (a) wanting to make a difference in society (Salyer, 2003; Schlossberg, 1984, Simmons, 2005), (b) wanting to spend more time with their family (Salyer, 2003; Schlossberg, 1984; Simmons, 2005), and (c) fulfilling a lifelong dream (Schlossberg, 1984; Simmons, 2005). Increasing one’s quality of life and having more time for travel were also identified as reasons to change careers (Simmons, 2005).

From Career-Changers to Quality Teachers

There is much debate as to whether or not career-changers make qualified and committed teachers. Some individuals believe that career-changers are uncommitted; however, all individuals partaking in the Johnson and colleagues study (2005) stand by their decision to change careers and feel they will continue to teach until retirement. Peske and associates (2001) conducted a study among traditionally and alternatively certified teachers and found that many new teachers did not enter teaching with the thought of making it a lifelong career. Many respondents stated they would teach for a few years before moving into a new line of work. Brownell and Sindelar (2005) also found that many mid-career changers view teaching as a temporary job until they find some other field they are interested in making their new career. Ingersoll (1997; 2001) found many career-changers who were alternatively certified were leaving the teaching field within a few years. This has made several critics question whether or not ACPs were adequately preparing these career-changers for a smooth transition into the field
of education (Chin & Young, 2007; Tigchelaar et al., 2008). Career-changers are able to bring into the classroom their earlier experiences in training, work and life and may be able to adequately transfer their knowledge into teaching (Johnson et al., 2005; Tigchelaar et al., 2008).

Gonzales Rodriguez and Sjostrom (1998) found that second-career teachers needed time and practice to become good teachers, whereas, first career teachers need to learn skills (Tigchelaar et al., 2008). Second-career teachers bring many competencies to the classroom such as problem-solving, coping and communication skills, and the ability to work with diversity (Chambers, 2002; Gonzales Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1998; Haipt, 1988; Tigchelaar et al., 2008). Novak and Knowles (1992) found that second-career teachers brought with them organizational and management structures which would assist them in the classroom and with solving instructional problems. Eifler and Potthoff (1998) believe that these competencies are not very applicable to successful teaching.

Research has identified several characteristics of second-career teachers such as the ability to communicate effectively, the capacity to multi-task, having a strong work ethic, and being analytical thinkers (Chambers, 2002; Morton et al., 2006). Tigchelaar and colleagues (2008) found that second-career teachers were more student-centered and more aware of the consequences of their behaviors and first-career teachers were more curriculum-centered. Other studies show that second career teachers have difficulty working with children and working in groups (Freidus, 1994; Tigchelaar et al., 2008).
Conclusion

Adequately preparing the four million or more teachers needed in the next few years will be an awesome endeavor. With today’s economy, ACPs may be preparing more and more career-changers. Because of this, they need to base their programs on the needs of these particular teaching candidates. This review of the literature has discussed in detail teacher preparation programs, both for general and special educators as well as traditional and alternative certification programs. Teacher education programs must focus on the needs of the teachers; this will provide good teaching, which is the foundation of a solid education for our children (Roth & Swail, 2000; Wright et al., 1997)
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY AND PRESENTATION

Alternative certification programs address the shortage of qualified and competent teachers (Bradshaw, 1998; Roth & Swail, 2000). Due to current economic conditions and the highly qualified mandate of No Child Left Behind, there may be an increase in alternatively certified teachers. This study examined the motivations of individuals who chose alternative routes to teacher certification and further clarified if those motivations changed throughout the course of their teaching careers. Furthermore, the study focused on participants’ perceived strengths and weaknesses of their alternative certification preparation, as well as if these educators felt adequately prepared to teach.

Research Questions

The research questions designed to guide this study are implied throughout the selected literature. Through these research questions, I gained a better understanding of what motivates people to change careers and choose the route selected. Results may help to ensure graduates of ACPs are adequately prepared to understand the needs of their future students. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the different motivating factors affecting the decision to become a general or special educator?
2. Since becoming a general or special educator, have the reasons for making this career choice changed? If yes, where do the differences occur between general and special educators?
3. What are the different motivating factors affecting general and special educators’
decisions to go through a non-university-based alternative certification program?
4. What do you perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the non-university-based
alternative certification program?

Selection of Participants

Subjects of this study included current interns and graduates of an ACP in north central
Texas. The participants were current interns for the 2009-2010 school year and those certified
the three years prior: (a) 2006-2007, (b) 2007-2008, and (c) 2008-2009. Subjects were invited
from both general and special education. Participants for the online focus group were taken from
those individuals who responded positively to the invitation to participate.

Instrumentation

The instrument for the research study was a web-based survey utilizing a Likert format.
The reader is referred to Appendices A, B, C, D, and E for further information pertaining to the
administration of the survey. The quantitative portion of the survey (see Appendix C) was
subdivided into three areas: (a) demographics, (b) motivating factors affecting career/program
choice, and (c) views regarding subjects’ preparation. The qualitative portion of the survey
pertained to the participants’ perceived ideas about the strengths and weaknesses of the program.
The results from the survey portion of the research study allowed me to address the differences
between general and special educators.

Additionally, the survey included a section asking for volunteers to participate in an
online focus group. The qualitative portion of the study was conducted to clarify and provide
more detailed answers to specific questions obtained from the quantitative data obtained through the survey.

As an incentive for those who participated in the survey, an online random number generator was used to choose a winner for a $25 gift certificate to Amazon.com. Additionally, the same number generator and incentive was used to choose a winner from the focus group participants.

Data Collection Procedures

After the development of the survey instrument, a pilot study was conducted. The survey instrument was sent to professionals in the field of teacher preparation and alternative certification. The professionals were asked to read through the survey for content and clarity. The suggestions offered by these professionals were acknowledged and changes were made as recommended. Once the survey was completed, I sent informed consents (see Appendix B and Appendix G) and survey (Appendix C) to the IRB for final approval (see Appendix D).

I provided the director of the ACP four items: (a) a copy of the invitation to participate (see Appendix A), (b) a link to the informed consent (see Appendix B) via the web-based survey (see Appendix C), (c) the identification of the four groups: current interns, graduates from the 2008-2009 school year, graduates from the 2007-2008 school year, and graduates from the 2006-2007 school year, and (d) the code needed to access the survey. Each group of participants received a code to ensure that only invited participants could take the survey. The information was then forwarded to participants by the program director. After the second week, I sent a completion reminder to the director to forward to participants (see Appendix E).
While participants completed the survey, I prepared a list of focus group volunteers by gathering their volunteer information and sending out an information gathering letter (see Appendix F) with more detailed information pertaining to the online focus group. Once the final list of focus group volunteers was completed, I grouped participants according to available dates and time, and then assigned them usernames. Furthermore, during data collection, I contacted the company setting up the online focus group to provide updated information regarding specifics about the focus group, such as times and dates. Once the focus group company received this information and set-up the site, they provided I with a password to provide participants. The selected participants were then contacted with specifics pertaining to the online focus group including the (a) date, (b) time, (c) log-in information, and (d) informed consent (see Appendix G).

The focus group questioning route was developed after successful completion of data analysis. The focus group questioning route (see Appendix H) was developed by analyzing the quantitative data obtained from the survey. The questioning route was designed to add further detail about areas of interest and statistical significance that became evident through the quantitative data analysis. Transcription of the focus group (Appendix I) was saved and printed directly from the focus group. At the conclusion of the online focus group, codes for the qualitative data were developed. Hand-developed codes were used instead of using computer-based systems in order to ensure the efficiency of data collection.
Methodology

Descriptive statistics were used to provide introductory information regarding the sample used in the study. For Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 an independent samples t-test was run. A t-test of independent means is defined as, “A procedure for determining whether the observed difference between the means of two groups on variable $X$ is statistically significant. This procedure is used when there is no relationship between the two sets of scores” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; p.655). To test the mean scores for statistical significance when a matching variable is not available the researcher will use a $t$-test (Gall et al., 2007). For this study, statistical significance was deemed to have occurred at a selected alpha level of $p < .05$.

Mean differences were also calculated for Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. The mean difference is used to determine the difference of the means between two groups. Once the independent sample $t$-tests were completed, I measured the mean differences among motivating factors. Mean differences were measured to compare the differences between general and special educators regarding the motivating factors affecting their decisions. The mean differences provided a comparison of the sample studied, as well as being used to calculate the standard mean difference in order to obtain effect sizes.

According to Gall and associates (2007), effect sizes are, “a statistical measure of the strength of an observed difference between groups on a test or other instrument or the strength of an observed relationship between two or more measured variables” (p. 639). The effect size was determined by calculating Cohen’s $d$. Cohen’s $d$ was used to provide further information regarding the magnitude of the statistically significant differences between motivating factors affecting general and special educator’s decisions pertaining to each of the first three research questions. Interpreting effect size for Cohen’s $d$ was used following the qualitative guidelines as
outlined in Hinkle, Wiersman, & Jurs (2003). A small effect size is determined for a value of less than .25. For a medium effect size the guideline is .50, and for a large effect size the researcher is looking for an effect size of 1.0 or greater.

Qualitative research is “Multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter…Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials…that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in people’s lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).” Qualitative data were used for Research Question 4 to provide personal experience information regarding what the survey participants felt were strengths and weaknesses of their alternative certification program. Further qualitative data were used to provide the reader with supplementary information related to the areas of statistical significance regarding the motivating factors associated with general and special educator’s decisions. With the advancement of technology, an online focus group was used in order to meet the availability and location needs of the survey participants. The use of this cutting-edge technology also allows researchers to conduct multiple focus groups within a relatively short period of time, facilitating a more diverse participant pool. The information gleaned from the focus group was recorded from the survey itself and codes were determined. Descriptive statistics was also used to answer Research Question 4 based on the emerging themes that were relevant to the literature review.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to compare the motivating factors affecting general and special educators’ decisions to become a teacher and to determine if those reasons have changed since beginning their teaching career. Additionally, the study compared general and special educator’s reasons for choosing a non-university-based alternative teacher certification program (ACP) and what they perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of the ACP. A survey invitation was sent to current interns and graduates of a north central Texas ACP. The invitation was sent to a total 2,229 with 187 emails returned as undeliverable. A total of 491 general educators and 160 special educators completed the survey, for a total of 651 respondents, thus providing a 32% return rate. Eleven survey responses were discarded for incompletion automatically through SPSS list-wise deletion.

The review of literature notes that most career-changers are female and approximately 30 years old (Crow et al., 1990; Morton et al., 2006; Murname et al., 1991). Additional research states that ACPs attract male individuals over the age of 25 (Edelen-Smith & Sileo, 1996; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; Roth & Lutz, 1986). The survey respondents for the quantitative portion of the study were predominately female (77.6%) between the ages of 20 and 29 (33.4%).

Quantitative Results

Research Question 1: What are the different motivating factors affecting the decision to become a general or special educator?

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of general and special educators rated similarly on all motivating factors related to the decision to become a teacher. Among general educators, being a role model ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .91$), making a contribution to society ($M = 4.47$, $SD = .84$) and self-
fulfillment \((M = 4.41, SD = .90)\) were rated with the highest means which suggests these motivating factors were somewhat important to very important in their decision to change careers and become a teacher. Special educators rated making a contribution to society \((M = 4.41, SD = 1.03)\), prior experience with children \((M = 4.27, SD = 1.06)\), and self-fulfillment \((M = 4.30, SD = .97)\) between somewhat important and very important in their decision to change careers and become a teacher. The motivating factors among general educators having the least effect on the decision for general educators to become a teacher is social status with a mean of 2.52 \((SD = 1.12)\), which suggests this factor was somewhat unimportant to neutral. Special educators rated social status even lower with a mean of 2.39 \((SD = 1.18)\).

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. Comparative motivating factors by educator category in the decision to become a teacher. [Note: \(N_{\text{gen}} = 485; N_{\text{sped}} = 158; 1 = \text{very unimportant}; 2 = \text{somewhat important}; 3 = \text{neutral}; 4 = \text{somewhat important}; 5 = \text{very important}]\)

Table 7 displays mean differences highlighting discrepancies among groups as to why the respondents chose to become a teacher. According to the results of this study, being a role model
had the largest mean difference at .35 followed by (a) having family and/or friends that are/were teachers, (b) prior experience working in schools, and (c) prior experience working with children, with a mean difference of .26. The smallest mean differences from this study occur with the questions related to schedule/hours and job security. The mean differences of these two questions were .03 and .02 respectively.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>General Educators</th>
<th>Special Educators</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being a Role Model</td>
<td>$M = 4.33$</td>
<td>$M = 3.98$</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = .91$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.04$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Family are/were Teachers</td>
<td>$M = 2.97$</td>
<td>$M = 2.71$</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.35$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.34$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Experience with Children</td>
<td>$M = 4.02$</td>
<td>$M = 4.27$</td>
<td>-.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.15$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.06$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Experience in Schools</td>
<td>$M = 3.34$</td>
<td>$M = 3.61$</td>
<td>-.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.39$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.41$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Demands</td>
<td>$M = 3.45$</td>
<td>$M = 3.27$</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.34$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.45$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$M = 3.15$</td>
<td>$M = 3.30$</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.25$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.20$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Status</td>
<td>$M = 2.52$</td>
<td>$M = 2.39$</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.12$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.18$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Fulfillment</td>
<td>$M = 4.41$</td>
<td>$M = 4.30$</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = .89$</td>
<td>$SD = .97$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>$M = 3.33$</td>
<td>$M = 3.25$</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.11$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.06$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to Society</td>
<td>$M = 4.47$</td>
<td>$M = 4.41$</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = .84$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.03$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Availability</td>
<td>$M = 3.56$</td>
<td>$M = 3.63$</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.23$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.16$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always Wanted to be a Teacher</td>
<td>$M = 3.73$</td>
<td>$M = 3.79$</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.23$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.24$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule/Hours</td>
<td>$M = 3.92$</td>
<td>$M = 3.89$</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.13$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.19$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>$M = 3.89$</td>
<td>$M = 3.87$</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD = 1.16$</td>
<td>$SD = 1.16$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: $N_{gen} = 485$; $N_{sped} = 158$; Absolute values were used to interpret the mean difference.*
Statistical analysis consisted of a t-test. An alpha level of .05 was selected as the criteria point of statistical significance. Utilizing PASW software, statistical significance \( p < .05 \) was calculated in four out of thirteen motivating factors (see Table 8). These factors include (a) being a role model, (b) prior experience working with children, (c) family/friends being teachers, and (d) prior experience working in schools.

Both Cohen’s \( d \) and \( r^2 \) are listed (see Table 8) to allow the reader a more direct comparison to other research which may use \( r \) instead of \( d \). I chose to report utilizing Cohen’s \( d \) during data analysis. Of the motivating factors listed in the survey, the factor of being a role model had the largest effect size \( (d = .323) \) suggesting that being a role model figures moderately into the decision to become a general or special educator. The next closest factor was prior experience with children \( (d = -.195) \). The motivating factor with the smallest effect size \( (d = .014) \) was for job security, closely followed by schedule/hours \( (d = .025) \).

Table 8

| Motivating Factors in the Decision to Become a Teacher |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Factor                          | t   | df  | Sig. | d   | \( r^2 \) |
| Role Model*                     | 4.091 | 641 | < .001 | .323 | .025 |
| Prior Experience with Children* | -2.472 | 641 | .014 | -.195 | .009 |
| Family/Friends are/were Teachers* | 2.107 | 641 | .036 | .166 | .007 |
| Prior Experience in Schools*    | -2.059 | 641 | .040 | -.163 | .007 |
| Family Demands                  | 1.385 | 641 | .167 | .109 | .003 |
| Income                          | -1.314 | 641 | .189 | -.103 | .003 |
| Self-Fulfillment                | 1.246 | 641 | .213 | .098 | .002 |
| Social Status                   | 1.242 | 641 | .215 | .098 | .002 |
| Contribution to Society         | .847 | 641 | .397 | .067 | .001 |
| Autonomy                        | .843 | 641 | .400 | .066 | .001 |
| Job Availability                | -.666 | 641 | .506 | -.053 | .001 |
| Always Wanted to be a Teacher   | -.505 | 641 | .614 | -.039 | < .001 |
| Schedule/Hours                  | .320 | 641 | .749 | .025 | < .001 |
| Job Security                    | .182 | 641 | .855 | .014 | < .001 |

Note: \( N = 640; r^2 \) & \( d \) refer to effect size; *Sig = \( p < .05 \); Absolute values were used to interpret \( d \).
Research Question 2: Since becoming a general or special educator, have the reasons for making this career choice changed? If yes, where do the differences occur between general and special educators?

The second research question sought to identify those individuals who are still teaching to see if their original motivating factors have changed since they began teaching. The results of this question can be seen in Table 9. The number of teachers who answered yes to their original motivating factors changing since becoming a teacher was 125. This suggests that participants are remaining in the teaching field for many of the same reasons they changed careers to become a teacher. There was a large discrepancy between the number of general and special educators who answered the survey questions related to if their reasons for remaining a teacher have changed since becoming a teacher. Due to this discrepancy and the fact that I found only two factors with statistically significant group differences, I chose to interpret all results assuming equal variance.

Mean differences provided more information regarding the differences between general and special educators decision to remain a teacher (see Table 9).

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Differences for Remaining a Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Experience with Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Experience in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always Wanted to be a Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 9 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>General Educators</th>
<th>Special Educators</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Fulfillment</td>
<td>( M = 4.05 )</td>
<td>( M = 4.31 )</td>
<td>-.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.00 )</td>
<td>( SD = .88 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Demands</td>
<td>( M = 3.71 )</td>
<td>( M = 3.88 )</td>
<td>-.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.37 )</td>
<td>( SD = 1.21 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Experience with Children</td>
<td>( M = 3.68 )</td>
<td>( M = 4.38 )</td>
<td>-.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.32 )</td>
<td>( SD = .94 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Experience in Schools</td>
<td>( M = 3.25 )</td>
<td>( M = 3.58 )</td>
<td>-.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.04 )</td>
<td>( SD = .70 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always Wanted to be a Teacher</td>
<td>( M = 3.15 )</td>
<td>( M = 3.54 )</td>
<td>-.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.27 )</td>
<td>( SD = 1.17 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>( M = 3.94 )</td>
<td>( M = 4.31 )</td>
<td>-.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.19 )</td>
<td>( SD = .97 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>( M = 3.48 )</td>
<td>( M = 3.77 )</td>
<td>-.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.23 )</td>
<td>( SD = 1.11 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Fulfillment</td>
<td>( M = 4.05 )</td>
<td>( M = 4.31 )</td>
<td>-.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.00 )</td>
<td>( SD = .88 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Demands</td>
<td>( M = 3.71 )</td>
<td>( M = 3.88 )</td>
<td>-.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.37 )</td>
<td>( SD = 1.21 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a Role Model</td>
<td>( M = 4.24 )</td>
<td>( M = 4.38 )</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.04 )</td>
<td>( SD = .75 )</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Status</td>
<td>( M = 2.41 )</td>
<td>( M = 2.54 )</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.23 )</td>
<td>( SD = 1.17 )</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Availability</td>
<td>( M = 3.84 )</td>
<td>( M = 3.81 )</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.08 )</td>
<td>( SD = 1.13 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule/Hours</td>
<td>( M = 3.68 )</td>
<td>( M = 3.65 )</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( SD = 1.33 )</td>
<td>( SD = 1.29 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: \( N_{gen} = 99; N_{sped} = 26 \); Absolute values were used to interpret the mean difference.*

According to the results, having prior experiences working with children rated as the highest factor in remaining a teacher with a mean difference of -.71. This was followed by prior experience working in schools with a mean difference of -.42. The smallest mean differences from this study were related to job availability and schedule/hours with mean differences of .03 and .02 respectively.

Statistical analysis consisted of a t-test. An alpha level of .05 was selected as the criteria point of statistical significance. Utilizing PASW software, statistical significance \((p < .05)\) was
calculated in two of the motivating factors (see Table 10). These factors include schedule/hours and job availability.

Again, both Cohen’s $d$ and $r^2$ are listed to allow the reader a more direct comparison to other research which may use $r$ instead of $d$. I chose to report utilizing Cohen’s $d$ during data analysis. Cohen’s $d$ for Research Question 2 shows that the motivating factor of having prior experience working with children has the larger effect size ($d = -.464$) than the next closest motivating factor of making a contribution to society ($d = -.353$). The motivating factor with the smallest effect size ($d = .014$) was the schedule/hours followed closely by the factor of job availability ($d = .023$).

Table 10

Motivating Factors in the Decision to Remain a Teacher

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sig</th>
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<td>Contribution to Society</td>
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<td>.149</td>
<td>-.262</td>
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<td>Always Wanted to be a Teacher</td>
<td>-1.401</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior Experience Working in Schools</td>
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<td>Role Model</td>
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<td>Family Demands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Status</td>
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<td>123</td>
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<td>Job Availability</td>
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<td>.898</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule/Hours</td>
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<td>123</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $N = 640$; $r^2$ & $d$ refer to effect size, *Sig = $p < .05$; Absolute values were used to interpret $d$.  

47
Research Question 3: What are the different motivating factors affecting general and special educators’ decisions to go through a non-university-based alternative certification program?

As shown in Figure 2, the majority of general and special educators rated similarly on all motivating factors related to the decision to attend a non-university-based alternative certification program.

![Figure 2](image-url)

*Figure 2. Comparative motivating factors by educator category in choosing a non-university-based alternative certification program. [Note: N_gen = 485; N_spd = 158; 1 = very unimportant; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = neutral; 4 = somewhat important; 5 = very important.]*

Among general educators, already having a degree ($M = 4.56, SD = .92$), earning an income while teaching ($M = 4.39, SD = .101$) and the length of time to complete certification requirements ($M = 4.39, SD = .91$) were rated with the highest means, which suggests these motivating factors were somewhat important to very important in their choice of a non-university-based alternative certification program. Special educators rated already having a degree ($M = 4.61, SD = .90$), earning an income while teaching ($M = 4.32, SD = 1.14$), and the
length of time to complete certification requirements ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .87$) between somewhat important and very important in their choice. The motivating factors among general educators having the least effect on their choice of a non-university-based alternative certification program is the availability of ongoing mentoring with a mean of 3.61 ($SD = 1.26$), which suggests this factor was somewhat unimportant to neutral. Special educators rated this about the same with a mean of 3.64 ($SD = 1.30$).

Mean differences were also used as a method of examining differences between general and special educators decision in choosing a non-university-based ACP. (see Table 11). According to the results of this study, having coursework that did not interfere with other time commitments had a mean difference of .18 followed by the cost of the program with a mean difference of -.17. The smallest mean difference occurred with the question related to ongoing availability of mentors with a mean difference of .02.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>General Educators</th>
<th>Special Educators</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coursework not Interfering with other Commitments</td>
<td>$M = 4.09$ $SD = 1.11$</td>
<td>$M = 3.92$ $SD = 1.24$</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Program</td>
<td>$M = 4.00$ $SD = 1.11$</td>
<td>$M = 4.17$ $SD = 1.05$</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had Knowledge, Needed to Learn how to teach</td>
<td>$M = 4.11$ $SD = 1.09$</td>
<td>$M = 3.99$ $SD = 1.07$</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earning an Income During First Year of Teaching</td>
<td>$M = 4.39$ $SD = 1.01$</td>
<td>$M = 4.32$ $SD = 1.14$</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching during Coursework</td>
<td>$M = 3.89$ $SD = 1.16$</td>
<td>$M = 3.80$ $SD = 1.20$</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing Mentoring Availability</td>
<td>$M = 3.61$ $SD = 1.26$</td>
<td>$M = 3.64$ $SD = 1.29$</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $N_{gen} = 485$; $N_{sped} = 158$; Absolute values were used to interpret mean differences.
Statistical analysis consisted of a t-test. An alpha level of .05 was selected as the criteria point of statistical significance. Utilizing PASW software, statistical significance ($p < .05$) was not calculated in any of the motivating factors (see Table 12).

Table 12

**Motivating Factors in Choosing a Non-University-Based Alternative Certification Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$d$</th>
<th>$r^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Program</td>
<td>-1.685</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.317</td>
<td>-.134</td>
<td>.004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coursework not Interfering with other Commitments</td>
<td>1.683</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field-Based Coursework</td>
<td>-1.321</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>-.105</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Time to Complete Certification Requirements</td>
<td>-1.162</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>-.092</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had Knowledge, Needed to Learn <em>how</em> to teach</td>
<td>1.148</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.609</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching during Coursework</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earning an Income While Teaching</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already had a Degree</td>
<td>-.635</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing Mentoring Availability</td>
<td>-.197</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: $N = 640$; $r^2$ & $d$ refer to effect size, Sig = $p < .05$; Absolute values were used to interpret $d$.*

**Research Question 4: What do you perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the non-university-based alternative certification program?**

From the current study, several themes emerged from the qualitative data received regarding the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the participants’ alternative certification program, which shows not to be directly related to the level of preparedness these teachers felt. The main themes which emerged regarding the strengths of the participants alternative certification program include (a) the availability of resources, (b) practical applications of coursework, (c) knowledgeable and supportive instructors, (d) the ability to work while training and receiving pay, (e) the quick rate of completing the requirements, (f) the flexibility of class
times, and (g) networking opportunities. The themes emerging from the qualitative data regarding the weaknesses of the alternative certification program include (a) content not being specific enough, (b) coursework being repetitive, (c) lack of communication to participants from the ACP staff, (d) lack of student teaching, (e) lack of observations and feedback when observations did occur, (f) differentiating instruction, and (g) the program being unorganized.

Job placement, classroom management, mentoring, and lesson planning were top themes among program strengths and weaknesses. These three items were rated based on the participants’ feelings on their preparedness in each of these areas among others. The quantitative data shows that in the area of classroom management, 35.5% of participants felt they were very satisfied with their preparedness and only 1.4% felt they were very dissatisfied. Additionally, in the area of lesson planning, 25.2% were very satisfied and 3.3% were very dissatisfied with their preparedness in lesson planning.

Qualitative Results

Information for the qualitative portion of the current study was gleaned through the use of an online focus group. The company chosen to host the online focus group was IDEAL Group. I worked with IDEAL Conference, a technology company striving to enhance the productivity and employability of persons with disabilities, to set up the focus group conference rooms.

Online Focus Group

Upon conclusion of the online survey, I emailed all those who volunteered at the end of the survey to be part of the online focus group. A total of 36 participants were contacted with information regarding the date and time of the focus group. At this time ten individuals declined
the invitation. The online focus group was set for a Monday evening with a reminder email being sent earlier that afternoon. The focus group consisted of seven participants from the original 26 volunteers.

Participants had varied backgrounds pertaining to subject and grade level currently teaching and previous careers. Six participants were female and one participant was male which mirrors the sample from the quantitative portion of the study. The participants included a teacher of bilingual kindergartners, high school advanced placement government and economics, fourth grade math, third graders, 5th grade science, secondary remedial math, and second graders. Previous careers included a publicist, business management, human capital consulting, consulting systems analyst, youth development educators, and a probation officer. As the focus group progressed, themes began to emerge and these were identified and noted in the remainder of this chapter.

Research Question 1 suggested that there were differences in the reasons why general and special educators chose to become a teacher. The first question posed in the focus group was to gain a better understanding of the answers reported in the quantitative portion of the survey. I was interested in knowing what motivated these individuals to become a teacher, as well as their thoughts on serving as a role model as opposed to prior experience working with children and prior experience working in schools. The themes that emerged regarding their motivations on becoming a teacher included fulfilling a dream, having a passion for children, and not being able to get a job in their field. The two themes of having a passion for children and fulfilling a job are closely related to the factor of being a role model as well as the special educators’ reasons for prior experience working with children and in schools, so I decided to delve further into the role model answer.
The participants were asked what being a role model encompasses; the main theme that emerged was teaching values to their students. Values noted included time management, goal setting, personal responsibility, understanding, and getting along with others. Another theme emerging from the discussion on choosing a teaching career was that not many of these teachers felt they would have the responsibility of being a role model to their students, but there was a consensus that even with the responsibilities of being a role model and other challenges, all but one felt they made the right decision.

Research Question 2 focused on the individuals whose reasons to remain a teacher changed from those of becoming a teacher. In the focus group, I delved further into how their experiences working with children and making a contribution to society were important in teacher retention. The overall theme that emerged was that teachers did not realize the level of difficulty in being a teacher. From the difficulty of being a teacher, several ideas emerged (e.g., having intrinsic motivators, disliking kids, knowing that there are emotional differences as well as academic differences you might be making in a student’s life). One teacher wrote, “Working with kids is the VERY DEFINITION of making a difference in the world.”

I sought for more information pertaining to Research Question 3 which focused on why individuals chose a non-university-based alternative certification program. The quantitative portion of the survey suggested that a reduced work load was an important reason to choose a non-university-based alternative certification program. The focus group participants suggested that time constraints and money were the reasons for going through a non-university-based alternative certification program. Three participants relayed that they already had two degrees and did not feel like getting another degree and needed to start earning money right away. An area that emerged from this portion of the focus group was the stigma placed on alternative
certification programs in general. The focus group participants mentioned that schools had lower expectations of ACP graduates initially. The reason given by participants for this occurrence is that it might be due to ACPs not having a hierarchy as there are in colleges and universities. Additional reasons included a lack of vocabulary associated with teachers, and/or credibility missing.

The final section of the focus group was related to Research Question 4 which was related to the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the ACP program. The quantitative results suggested that job placement, classroom management, mentoring and lesson planning were perceived to be both a strength and a weakness of the program; I wanted the focus group participants to elaborate on how these were either strengths or weaknesses. The results of the focus group suggest that there was not much assistance in the area of job placement and that getting a job in education is all about who you know. As far as classroom management there were mixed reviews, but most agreed that this was a weakness of the program. The focus group participants stated that there were not enough real-life examples, and many participants mentioned that this is something you perfect the longer you teach. Additional weaknesses came out of the focus group through a question related to their preparedness. Focus group participants stated they did not feel prepared (a) in ways to relate/teach their students, (b) how to play teacher politics, (c) the amount of additional time teaching takes, and (d) the importance and role of assessment. The results of lesson planning being a strength or weakness were about half and half. Those that mentioned lesson planning as a strength stated that they were provided several references for lesson planning. The ideas that emerged regarding the weaknesses were that they were not realistic, only the formal lesson plans were shown.
Mentoring was also another area of mixed reviews. For the most part, participants agreed that they had good mentors from the ACP, and if they did not feel they had an adequate mentor through the ACP they felt good about their district mentor. Since the most positively favored area was mentoring, I closed with asking what skills make for a good mentor. Answers varied, but the most common response was that they wanted a mentor who teaches the same subject and/or grade. Additional answers included someone who (a) provides encouragement, (b) is available to discuss ideas, (c) takes an active interest in their mentee and their class, (d) offers suggestions, and (e) develops a relationship with their mentee. One participant said the following of her mentor, “She has made me a better teacher through her encouragement and support.”
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An online survey and online focus group were used to accrue information regarding the differences in motivating factors affecting general and special educators’ decisions for (a) becoming a teacher, (b) remaining a teacher, and (c) choosing a non-university-based alternative certification program. In addition, information was sought on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the alternative teacher certification program (ACP). This chapter includes (a) summary, (b) implications, and (c) recommendations.

Summary

Since the 1980s, ACPs have had a place in the preparation of future teachers, but with the inception of No Child Left Behind’s (2001) highly qualified mandate, these programs are becoming more widely cited. Due to the highly qualified mandate of NCLB and the current economic conditions, there appears to be an increase in alternatively certified teachers. Alternative certification programs are known to address the shortage of qualified and competent teachers (Bradshaw, 1998; Roth & Swail, 2000).

Data from this study revealed that both general and special educators rated making a contribution to society and self-fulfillment as important factors for becoming a teacher. The difference occurred with general educators stating that they went into teaching to be a role model, whereas, special educators went into teaching because of prior experience with children. These results are somewhat surprising considering the presupposition that general educators are more motivated by factors related to prior experiences in schools and/or with children as well as items that did not involve children. The hypothesis regarding special educators was that this
group would be more motivated by factors related to the well-being of children. The motivating factors of job availability and the schedule/hours were different among general and special educators’ reasons for remaining a teacher.

The factors related to the decision to attend a non-university-based ACP were essentially the same for both general and special educators. General educators rated coursework not interfering with other commitments higher than special educators, whereas, special educators rated the cost of the program higher. However, these differences were not statistically significant. The data also reveal that job placement, classroom management, mentoring, and lesson planning were top themes among both the strengths and weaknesses of the ACP.

Overall, there are differences in the motivating factors affecting general and special educators as they relate to teaching and their ACP program. These differences are few, yet significant enough to take note. The differences follow in line with what previous research has found as to why people choose ACPs and why they decide to change careers and become a teacher. The main difference found in the current study for why individuals chose to become a teacher pertains to being a role model for children. Additionally, the main difference related to the reasons for staying in the field relate to having prior experience working with children. When asked why individuals chose a non-university-based ACP, the main differences were the cost and coursework not interfering with prior time commitments.

Implications

Understanding the reasons as to why individuals are entering the teaching profession, why they are remaining teachers, as well as why they are choosing the alternative certification route may assist in the recruitment and retention efforts of ACPs. Furthermore, providing
curriculum that fosters the motivating factors which affect the teaching decisions of general and special educators may help to increase the recruitment and retention efforts of these ACPs.

The data revealed that general educators are becoming teachers to be role models for their students. Additionally, special educators are becoming teachers because they have prior experience working with children. ACPs should take into consideration the psychological aspect of being a role model when preparing curriculum for future general educators. Furthermore, ACPs may need to recognize the experiences that special educators have with children when preparing future curriculum. Curriculum could focus on role model characteristics and what it means to be a role model, as well as focusing on more specific information related to working with children, especially children with special needs.

A second implication of the findings is related to the choice of a non-university-based alternative certification program. For ACPs to continue in assisting with teacher shortages and producing quality teachers there should be an understanding of why individuals are choosing this route, as well as keeping updated on the strengths and weaknesses and how these relate to teacher preparedness. The consensus from general and special educators was that they chose a non-university-based ACP because they already had a degree, they could earn an income while teaching, and the ACP was the quickest way to earn teacher certification. These are areas that the literature has mentioned as to why individuals go through ACPs and must not be disregarded in the development of future ACP requirements. For successful recruitment and retention, ACPs should be aware of these factors to keep their program strong.

Curriculum changes should keep in mind the areas that their teaching candidates see as strengths and weaknesses. The results of this study showed that job placement, classroom management, mentoring, and lesson planning were both strengths and weaknesses of the
program. Since these were seen as a weakness in the minds of some of the teaching candidates it is important for the ACP to address the needs of their students when developing curriculum, such as surveying students on these items. The survey results imply that only 35.5% of participants were very satisfied with their preparedness in classroom management, implying that there needs to be some curriculum revamping in order for their future teachers to be successful, thus possibly ensuring their retention in the field. The survey results reveal that only 25.2% of participants were very satisfied with their preparedness in lesson planning, once again noting that some type of curriculum revamping may be needed.

Recommendations

The potential for further study is considerable. The first recommendation is to survey more than just one ACP in order to gain a better understanding of the differences in the motivating factors for becoming and remaining a teacher in different areas of the state of Texas and the United States. This information may assist in the recruitment and retention efforts of ACPs according to the region in which they live.

A second recommendation for further research is to analyze the data according to gender and number of years teaching. This analysis may further define the differences in motivating factors related to becoming and remaining a teacher, and in choosing a non-university-based ACP. The further analysis may assist ACPs programs in future curriculum development. Additionally, ACPs are more likely to attract males and minority individuals (Edelen-Smith & Sileo, 1996; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; Roth & Lutz, 1986) and the information gleaned from this further data analysis will help ACPs continue in their recruitment efforts. Further data analysis comparing the number of years teaching may assist ACPs with their curriculum
development by allowing me to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the program from year to year. Comparison of years teaching can also provide ACPs with information on how and where to recruit future ACP candidates.

The focus group discussed the aspect of mentoring in great detail. Mentoring has become a topic of interest when focusing on teacher preparation and is becoming more widely used and accepted (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1990; Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Jacobi, 1991; Johnson et al., 2005; USDE, 2004; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). A third recommendation for further research includes focusing more on the mentoring aspect of ACPs. The information gleaned from this research would enable ACPs to provide the quality mentors that ACP interns desire/need in order for these future teachers to stay in the classroom.
APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE
Dear Alternative Certification Intern/Graduate,

My name is Kathleen Hogan. I am a doctoral student at the University of North Texas (UNT) in the area of Special Education. I am conducting a research study as a requirement for my dissertation. The research study will focus on the motivating factors affecting general and special educators’ decisions to become a teacher and in choosing a non university-based alternative certification route.

There is a need to fill teaching positions with qualified personnel. Teachers going through alternative certification programs utilize skills from their previous careers, thus making their preparation different from that of traditional teacher preparation programs. The information derived from the proposed study may be utilized to further define the specific needs of teacher candidates in alternative certification programs. Further, it is hoped that the findings of the proposed study may be used to help guide future development of effective alternative certification programs.

You have been chosen because you are currently enrolled in, or have recently graduated from, a non university-based alternative certification program. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes. After completing the survey, there is an opportunity to be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift certificate to Amazon.com. The winner will be contacted by email or phone no later than November 2, 2009.

If you have any questions before completing the survey, please contact the investigator, Kathleen Hogan, by phone at 469-432-**** or by email at Kathleen.Hogan@unt.edu.

If you agree to participate in this survey please do the following:

1. Click on the following link http://web3.unt.edu/bullock/AC/ or type the web address in your browser.
2. Enter the following code (ENTER INFORMATION)
3. Read the informed consent and click the “SUBMIT” button to begin the survey.

Thank you for your participation.
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT - SURVEY
• The purpose of this survey is to accrue information regarding the motivations of alternative certification interns and graduates that led them to a teaching career. The study will focus on the motivations/factors affecting your particular decisions as they pertain to teaching, the factors affecting your choice of an alternative certification program versus a university-based alternative certification program, and your views regarding preparation.

• Participation in this survey is voluntary. You have the right to withdrawal at any time.

• The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes.

• All data obtained will remain confidential. Data collected from the survey will be secured in a separate location from the volunteer forms and drawing entry form. The confidentiality of your information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

• The possible benefits of participation include, (a) further defining the specific needs of teacher candidates in alternative certification programs and (b) assisting in the guidance of the future development of effective alternative certification programs.

• There are no foreseeable risks for completing this survey.

• This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB may be contacted at 940-565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

• For those who complete the SURVEY, there is an opportunity to include your personal information to be included in a drawing for a $25 gift certificate to Amazon.com. Please note that any personal information given will not be connected to your survey responses in any way.

• At the end of the survey there will be an opportunity to volunteer to participate in an online focus group. The online focus group will be anonymous and will be saved and transcribed to assist in further data collection as it relates to the study. Participants staying for the duration of the online focus group will be entered into a drawing to receive a $25 gift card to Amazon.com.

• You may print a copy of this notice for your records.

If you have any questions before completing the survey, please contact the investigator, Kathleen Hogan by phone at 469-432-**** or by email at Kathleen.Hogan@unt.edu. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Lyndal Bullock, at 940-565-2937 or at Lyndal.Bullock@unt.edu.
By entering your given code and clicking on the submit button you have read and understand the informed consent and are ready to proceed with the survey. If at any time you would like to withdrawal from the research study please close your browser.
APPENDIX C

ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION: A COMPARISON OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE MOTIVATIONS OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS SURVEY
The purpose of this survey is to accrue information regarding the motivations of alternative certification interns and graduates that led them to a teaching career. The survey is divided into four areas: Part I: (a) demographics; Part II: (b) motivations/factors affecting particular decisions as they pertain to teaching; Part III: (c) factors affecting your choice of an alternative certification program versus a university-based alternative certification program; and Part IV: (d) views regarding preparation.

**Part I**

**Demographics:**

(Items 1-3) This section was designed to gather background information.

1. Gender:
   - _____ Male
   - _____ Female

2. Please indicate your age from the following age ranges (check only one):
   - _____ 20-29
   - _____ 30-39
   - _____ 40-49
   - _____ 50-59
   - _____ 60 or older

3. I describe myself as:
   - _____ American Indian/Alaskan Native
   - _____ Asian or Pacific Islander
   - _____ Black or African American
   - _____ Hispanic
   - _____ White or Caucasian
   - _____ Inter-racial (please specify): ____________________________________________________________________

**Current Career Experiences:**
(Items 4-7) This section was designed to gather information pertaining to your current alternative certification program (ACP) status, and current career experiences.

4. Which **one** of the choices listed below **most closely** describes the primary teacher certification you have or are pursuing?

   _____ General Education
   _____ Special Education

5. What is your current alternative certification program (ACP) status? (Select only one)

   _____ ACP Intern-currently teaching for my first year
   _____ ACP Graduate-first year graduate
   _____ ACP Graduate-second year graduate
   _____ ACP Graduate-third year graduate

6. Which choice listed below **best describes** your current position?

   _____ I am currently teaching in my primary certification area.
   _____ I am currently teaching, but NOT in my primary certification area.
   _____ I am not teaching anymore, but am still working in the education field (e.g., principal, coordinator, support staff).
   _____ I am not teaching anymore; I have left the education field all together.

7. In what type of geographical area is your school located?

   _____ Rural
   _____ Suburban
   _____ Urban

---

**Part II**

(Items 7-36) This section was designed to gain further insight regarding your motivations and the factors affecting your career move into teaching.
For each choice listed below, please indicate how important the choice was in your decision to BECOME a teacher (1 = Very Unimportant, 5 = Very Important).

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unimportant</td>
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8. Autonomy
9. Being a role model
10. Family demands
11. Family/Friends are/were teachers
12. Income
13. Job availability
14. Job security
15. Making a contribution to society
16. Prior experience working in a school
17. Prior experience with children
18. Schedule/hours
19. Self-fulfillment
20. Social status
21. Something I always wanted to do
22. Have any of these reasons changed since becoming a teacher?

  ____ Yes (If yes, please continue with Part II)
  ____ No (If no, please skip to Part III)

For each choice listed below, please indicate how important the choice was in your decision to REMAIN a teacher (1 = Very Unimportant, 5 = Very Important).

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23. Autonomy
24. Being a role model
25. Family demands
26. Family/Friends are/were teachers
27. Income
28. Job availability
29. Job security
30. Making a contribution to society
31. Prior experience working in a school
32. Prior experience working with children
33. Schedule/hours
34. Self-fulfillment
35. Social status
36. Something I always wanted to do

Part III:
(Items 37-47) This section was designed to gain further information pertaining to your motivations regarding the route chosen to certification. For each statement below, please indicate how important the choice was in your decision to choose a non-degreed alternative certification program versus a university-based alternative certification program (1 = Very Unimportant, 5 = Very Important).

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37. Already had a degree(s)
38. Cost of the program
39. Coursework being field-based
40. Coursework time did not interfere with family or other commitments

41. Earning an income during first year of teaching

42. Had the knowledge, just needed to learn how to teach

43. Length of time to complete certification requirements

44. Ongoing mentoring availability

45. Teaching during coursework

Part IV

(Items 46-55) This section was designed to gain further information pertaining to your perceptions regarding the quality of your teacher preparation. For each choice listed below, please indicate your level of satisfaction pertaining to your preparedness to teach (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied).

1. Very Dissatisfied
2. Somewhat Dissatisfied
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat Satisfied
5. Very Satisfied

46. Ability to teach expectations (e.g., TEKS, classroom rules)

47. Classroom management

48. Collaboration skills

49. Differentiating instruction

50. Formal and informal student assessment

51. Providing appropriate instruction

52. Teaching critical thinking skills

53. Teaching social development skills

54. Utilizing technology in the classroom

55. Writing lesson plans
56. What do you consider strengths of your program?

57. What do you consider weaknesses of your program?

Thank you for participating in this research survey. As a thank you, I would like to enter your name in a drawing for a $25 gift certificate to Amazon.com. If you would like your name entered please fill out the following information. This information will in no way be connected to your survey responses. Thank you again.

Name: ____________________________________________

Email Address: _____________________________________

Phone Number: _____________________________________

If you are willing to participate in the online focus group please provide the following information. The purpose of this focus group is to provide the researcher with further information regarding specific survey questions. If you are selected for the online focus group you will be notified shortly after the close of the survey. If you stay for the duration of the online focus group your name will be entered into a drawing to receive a $25 gift card to Amazon.com. Thank you for your participation.

Name: ____________________________________________

Email Address: _____________________________________
Phone Number: _____________________________________

To assist in planning the online focus group, please indicate which of the following days and time frame would be most conducive to your schedule. Please allow for the whole two hours, but it is possible the focus group will not take the entire two hours. Thank you.

____ Monday ____ Tuesday ____ Wednesday

____ 4:30-6:30 ____ 8:00-10:00

Thank you for your participation.
APPENDIX D

IRB ACCEPTANCE LETTER
September 17, 2009

Kathleen Hogan  
College of Education  
University of North Texas

RE: Human Subjects Application No. 09-367

Dear Ms. Hogan:

In accordance with 45 CFR Part 46 Section 46.101, your study titled “Alternative Certification: A Comparison of Factors Affecting the Motivations of General and Special Educators” has been determined to qualify for an exemption from further review by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB).

No changes may be made to your study’s procedures or forms without prior written approval from the UNT IRB. Please contact Jordan Smith, Research Compliance Analyst, ext. 3940, if you wish to make any such changes. Any changes to your procedures or forms after 3 years will require completion of a new IRB application.

We wish you success with your study.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Patricia L. Kaminski, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

PK:js

CC: Dr. Lyndal M. Bullock
APPENDIX E

SURVEY COMPLETION REMINDER
Dear Alternative Certification Intern/Graduate,

My name is Kathleen Hogan and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Texas (UNT) in the area of Special Education. Approximately two weeks ago, you were emailed a survey request to assist in a research study focusing on the motivating factors affecting general and special educators’ decisions to become a teacher and in choosing a non university-based alternative certification program versus a university-based alternative certification program. The survey will be available until Tuesday October 27, 2009 and will take approximately 5-10 minutes. If you have already completed the survey, please accept my gratitude for assisting in this endeavor.

Please note there will be a drawing for a $25 gift certificate to Amazon.com for completing the survey. The winner will be notified by email or phone no later than October 30, 2009.

If you agree to participate in this survey please do the following:

1. Click on the following link (ENTER WEB ADDRESS) or type the web address in your browser.

2. Enter the following code (ENTER INFORMATION)

3. Read the informed consent and click the “SUBMIT” button to begin the survey.

Thank you!
Dear Name,
Thank you for participating in my research survey regarding motivations affecting your alternative certification decisions. I also want to thank you for volunteering to be a part of an online focus group.
To participate in the online focus group, you will need access to a web-based PC. Additionally, you will be required to complete a short download (approximately one minute). This means that if you are using a computer at school or work you will most likely have to have administrator rights. This download can be completed on the computer you will use before the actual focus group is conducted.
Due to the surveys and the volunteer forms not being connected for confidential reasons, I am asking that you please fill out the following information in order to assist me with grouping participants for the focus group. If you are chosen to participate in the focus group, you will be contacted soon. Thank you!

1. I am still interested in participating in the online focus group. ____Yes ____No
2. The day and time that follows, works best for my schedule.
   ____ Monday ____ Tuesday ____ Wednesday
   ____ 4:30-6:30 ____ 8:00-10:00
3. What is your current alternative certification program (ACP) status?
   ____ ACP Intern-currently teaching for my first year
   ____ ACP Graduate-first year graduate
   ____ ACP Graduate-second year graduate
   ____ ACP Graduate-third year graduate
4. Which one of the choices listed below most closely describes the primary teacher certification you have or are pursuing?
   ____ General Education
   ____ Special Education
APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION LETTER/INFORMED CONSENT
Dear Focus Group Participant,

My name is Kathleen Hogan and a few weeks ago you volunteered to participate in an online focus group after completing a survey focusing on the motivating factors affecting your decision to change careers. Final details have been arranged for the focus group and are included in this letter. If you are unable to participate please let me know by (ENTER DATE).

- The purpose of this focus group is to accrue further information regarding the motivations of alternative certification interns and graduates that led to a teaching career. The study will focus on the motivations/factors affecting your particular decisions as they pertain to teaching, the factors affecting your choice of an alternative certification program versus a university-based alternative certification program, and your views regarding preparation.

- The possible benefits of participation in the focus group include, (a) further defining the specific needs of teacher candidates in alternative certification programs and (b) assisting in the guidance of the future development of effective alternative certification programs.

- There are no known physical risks for participating in this focus group. It is possible you may be uncomfortable answering questions during the focus group. If at any time you do not feel comfortable answering, you may choose to refrain.

- Participation in this survey is voluntary. You have the right to withdrawal at any time with no penalty or loss of rights or benefits.

- Participation in the focus group will last approximately one and a half hours.

- The online focus group discussion will be saved and transcribed for further use in this research study. Focus group chat session will be saved on a UNT computer under the investigators personal files which is password protected. At the completion of the focus group, the chat session will be printed directly from the computer and the saved document will be deleted off the computer. Information obtained through this online focus group will remain confidential. Results may be published and used in future conferences. No identifying information will be published.

- This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB may be contacted at 940-565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

- At the end of the focus group participants who contributed for the duration of the focus group will have their names entered into a drawing for a $25 gift certificate to Amazon.com.
If you have any questions before the focus group, please contact the principle investigator, Kathleen Hogan by phone at 469-432-**** or by email at Kathleen.Hogan@unt.edu. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Lyndal Bullock, at 940-565-2937 or at Lyndal.Bullock@unt.edu.

If you have read and understand the informed consent above, and agree to participate in the focus group, please follow the directions below to access the online focus group:

- The focus group will be held on (ENTER DATE) at (ENTER TIME).
- Please make sure you are using a Windows-based PC and Internet Explorer.
- At this time please follow the instructions below to enter the chat room:
  1. Click on the following link (ENTER WEB ADDRESS) or type the following web address in your browser.
  2. Click on the link to download and install IDEAL conference (this will only take a minute or so).
  3. In the dialog box click “Run” each time it asks. This will download and install the focus group software.
  4. Once installed, click the link “CLICK HERE TO ENTER CONFERENCE ROOM”
  5. Enter the following user name: (ENTER USER NAME)
  6. Enter the following password: (ENTER PASSWORD)
  7. You have now entered the focus group chat room and are ready to participate. Once you have entered and are ready to begin please type “READY”.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this online focus group.
APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONING ROUTE
Let’s start with everyone sharing a little about themselves such as how long they have been teaching and what subjects they teach?

1. Tell me a little about what motivated you to become a teacher, what your previous career was, etc.

2. My quantitative research has indicated that general educators are more motivated by serving as a role model whereas special educators were motivated by prior experience with children and prior experience in schools. What thoughts do you have on this finding?

3. Why might your experience working with children and a desire to make a contribution to society be important in teacher retention?

4. Would those who are general educators talk to me about why the reduced work load would be an important reason as to why you might choose a non-university based alternative certification program. 
   Would those who are special educators talk to me about why the cost of a program would be an important reason to select a non-university based alternative program.

5. Job placement, classroom management, mentoring, and lesson planning were top themes listed for both strengths and weaknesses of the alternative certification program. From the perspective of your alternative certification program, tell me more about why these might be either a strength or a weakness.
APPENDIX I

FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTION
Welcome

KHogan: Good evening everyone. Thank you for volunteering to participate in this focus group. While we are waiting for everyone to join, please choose any color, other than black, and a font that you would like to use throughout the focus group and type "READY". The different colors will allow for everyone to keep straight who is talking. Typing "READY" will show me that you are ready to begin. Once everyone is here I will begin with some minor thoughts for this evening's focus group.

KHogan: Good evening G10.1
G10.1: Good evening, Kathleen.
G7.3: ready
KHogan: Good evening everyone. Thank you for volunteering to participate in this focus group. While we are waiting for everyone to join, please choose any color, other than black, and a font that you would like to use throughout the focus group and type "READY". The different colors will allow for everyone to keep straight who is talking. Typing "READY" will show me that you are ready to begin. Once everyone is here I will begin with some minor thoughts for this evening's focus group.

asstmod: ready
G7.3: ready
G10.1: ready
G12.3: ready
G6.2: ready
G6.2: ready
G14.3: Ready
KHogan: Be sure to get your color and font ready. We will get started in just a minute.
KHogan: Here are the directions again if you have just entered the room. Good evening everyone. Thank you for volunteering to participate in this focus group. While we are waiting for everyone to join, please choose any color, other than black, and a font that you would like to use throughout the focus group and type "READY". The different colors will allow for everyone to keep straight who is talking. Typing "Ready" will show me that you are ready to begin. Once everyone is here I will begin with some minor thoughts for this evening's focus group.

G7.3: I'M JUST CHANGING THE FONT A BIT TO MAKE SURE IT IS READABLE.
G6.2: ready
G14.3: Ready to go
G14.3: Changed my font as well.
G23.2: Ready
G24.1: Ready
KHogan: Hello and welcome. I appreciated you taking the time to help me with my research project.
KHogan: I want to go over a few notes to assist with this online focus group.
KHogan: I would like to hear from all participants, so please allow everyone a chance to talk(type).
KHogan: Also please feel free to add any additional information to others' comments.
KHogan: Please complete your full thought before entering your comments into the chat room.
KHogan: If by chance we have moved onto another question while you are still typing information from a previous question, please go ahead and finish your thought/comment.

KHogan: Are there any questions before we get started?

G14.3: No

G6.2: nope

G23.2: no

G24.1: no

KHogan: Well then. Let's start with everyone sharing a little about themselves such as how long they have been teaching and what subjects they teach? I will start.

KHogan: I taught in a self-contained classroom for students with emotional and behavioral students for seven years before I began the PhD program full time.

G10.1: I am a second year teacher of a bilingual kindergarten class.

G6.2: Wow...I am in my third year. I currently teach 4th grade Math

G14.3: I am teaching in my third year - AP US Government & Economics...mostly high school seniors.

G7.3: I was a long-term substitute during the 2007-2008 school year teaching kindergarten for a semester and then special ed for a semester. I am now in my second full year of teaching 3rd grade (all subjects).

G12.3: I've taught for over 25 years, but not in the school system. 4 years secondary, mostly doing remedial math / TAKS.

G23.2: I am in my 2nd year of teaching 5th grade science in a title 1 school.

G24.1: I have worked in education for 12 years, but been a certified classroom teacher for 2 years. 1 year in 1st grade, and currently in 2nd grade.

KHogan: may I ask what you did in education before becoming a teacher?

G24.1: I worked for Oklahoma State University as a youth development educator in the Division of Agriculture. I went into schools and taught programs to supplement all core subject areas using agriculture knowledge based program.

KHogan: Thank you. We seem to have a nice diverse group.
KHogan: Tell me a little about what your previous career was and what motivated you to become a teacher?

G10.1: I was a publicist for a 5-star hotel and restaurant. I was in PR for 7 years before I became a teacher. I was motivated by my love and interest in children. I was involved in a Hispanic ministry at my church, and I was moved by the children I worked with. I wanted to do something more fulfilling, so I changed careers.

G23.2: I was in business management in various roles. With my most recent being in a family small business. I volunteered at my kids schools and was motivated to receive my alt certification fulfilling a hs dream of being a teacher.

KHogan: Interesting, thank you, anyone else?

G14.3: I managed the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York City after working for the Wall Street Journal right out of undergrad. I then got my master's in diplomacy from Seton Hall in New Jersey and worked at the United Nations. When the recession started creeping in and I could not get a job in NYC that paid my rent in Queens (the UN most certainly did not), I decided to move home to Dallas. I began the PhD program in political science at UTD and decided teaching high school would be a good way to make a living while studying/writing. I was wrong. I love teaching high school more than I expected and I have since quit the program at UTD. For now, I am so thrilled to be doing what I do.

G7.3: I previously worked for a consulting firm in the D.C. area doing human capital consulting (almost 4 years) for federal agencies. My former background was industrial organizational psychology. I was most motivated to become a teacher so that I could make a noticeable difference in the lives of children.

G24.1: I most enjoyed going into classes and working with elementary age students. Since my degree is in Animal Science, the opportunity to get my alternative certification seemed like the way to pursue that passion in the shortest amount of time.

G12.3: Consulting Systems Analyst (my own business). I just got tired of seeing and fixing the same old problems. It lost its challenge. Plus I kept seeing what businesses had to do to get employees up to speed to even begin to be useful. I figured I could use my skills in an environment that needed them.

G6.2: Sorry my connection dropped...I was a probation officer and claims adjuster...decided to fulfill childhood desire to be teacher.

KHogan: You guys are amazing. You all have such varied experiences. Your students are very lucky to have well rounded teachers like yourselves.

KHogan: Okay onto some questions focused on my research findings from the survey you filled out.
KHogan : The research results have indicated that general educators are more motivated by serving as a role model whereas special educators were motivated by prior experience with children and prior experience in schools. What thoughts do you have on this finding?

G7.3 : I would agree that I am motivated to be a role model; however, I had previously worked with children through my church and I had an excellent experience as a student when I was in school.

G23.2 : had to rethink my response - just a moment

G23.2 : I was motivated to make a difference in children's lives that had less opportunities in education than my children. I guess that came from my experience volunteering

G6.2 : As a gen ed teacher I would have to agree with that. While I love kiddos, my motivation was much more in line with being a role model. I work in a very low income school and really look forward to helping kids realize education a way out of poverty.

G24.1 : My careers in education have been motivated by wanting to make a difference for the children that I work with. I want to get to know my kids on a personal level to help me reach them more effectively. I probably fall into the role model role more. I would say that is true with most that I work with; however, I would say that after a few year in the general ed classroom, many find their specialties and find their specialist areas from those experiences.

KHogan : As a teacher, what does being a role model encompass?

G12.3 : I wouldn't have categorized it that way, but the SpEd teachers I know have confirmed that. As for the GenEd teachers, that may be true but I haven't heard anybody state it that way. In my case, given where the standards are currently, I definitely take on the role model as a way of giving direction without trying to stuff it into them. Actions speak louder than words.

G14.3 : I do enjoy being a role model, but I did not think about that when I pursued a teaching career. I mainly wanted to embed myself in an academic environment and prepare for teaching at the college level. I had no idea I would love high school so much.

G12.3 : I think it mostly encompasses values that seem to be missing from the home environment.

G14.3 : For me it means making a student realize that he/she wants to do...this or that or maybe even become a teacher. It also means that they can confide in me or ask me how I feel about one of their decisions. I let them speak their mind and we never take anything off the table for debate or discussion. Most of my students do not get this at home.

KHogan : Very true G12 and G14
G7.3: For me, being a role model to students involves not only showing them how to be successful academically, but also how to be a good person, get along with others, learn to be a problem solver. I agree...values that are missing from home.

G24.1: I am in a title I school where many of our students come from homes where they don't get to spend much time with the adults in their lives for whatever reason. I have had several students where I am the main "constant" adult in their lives that they spend most of their awake hours with. I would say that I try to serve by teaching and demonstrating good character, understanding.

G23.2: Our children come from backgrounds with little to no family support. I am always exposing them to the opportunities available to them with an education. I use my own educational experiences and those of my own children to expose them to the opportunities available. I teach them the value of time management, goal setting and personal responsibility.

KHogan: Did you know that you would be responsible for the things you mentioned when you decided to become a teacher?

G6.2: I had absolutely NO idea all that would be involved when I decided to become a teacher.

KHogan: 😊

G12.3: It wasn't an issue for me since I express my values all the time. In fact, it was my students that first drew my attention to it consciously.

G7.3: Yes, I knew that I would be responsible for being a role model, but I agree with G6...I didn't know everything else!

G14.3: Not really. I thought there would be a few kids that I might be able to reach in an above-average way, but I had no idea it would be like this. I am absolutely involved with my students at every turn, all the time, anytime. I am the sponsor of Student Council and I have maybe 400+ as friends on Facebook. They can text me, email me, find me after school. They are a huge part of my life and while completely unexpected, I wouldn't trade it for the world. Many teachers would disagree with my closeness but I prefer to be their teacher and their friend.

KHogan: G12.3 in what ways did your students help you see this?

G10.1: Being a role model is wonderful and daunting at the same time. I work in a title I school, and I have some kiddos who have some major needs...from social skills to academic needs. Being a role model means offering a positive example of how to navigate life. It also involves encouraging children to be their best. I had NO IDEA that I would have to help children think through things like how to be kind to one another and how to solve problems.

G6.2: I have dealt with moral, ethical, life issues...I was not prepared to deal with everything from Santa Clause to death of peers and parents...I expected I would deal with kids being mean, fights, homework problems...
G12.3: They just started questioning me on why I did what I did. So I told them. At first, they didn't believe, but when they saw I still acted the same way and backed up what I told them, they started paying more attention.

KHogan: G14.3 do you find it hard for you or your students to draw the line when you are so available to them?

G6.2: did I drop again?

G14.3: I will admit that sometimes it's hard to have that line, it's true. But, after weighing the benefits and costs of my approach, I take the cost of that consequence as it happens. Mostly I set up a boundary asap, telling them that although I am their friend, I am concerned with their success in college and in their career. It is for this reason that I am still hard on them. In fact, the ones I am the hardest on know that it's because I care about their future. They react accordingly and show me a great deal of respect. There are always a few that will take advantage, but the good always outweighs the bad.

KHogan: Very nice...You have all mentioned that you were not expecting your role model duties to be so extensive, do you all still feel you made the right move in becoming a teacher?

G14.3: I have absolutely ZERO discipline problems and I credit this to my approach. Disrespecting me in the classroom would be like insulting their friend. They don't do it.

G14.3: I know I made the right move to become a teacher. No second guesses and no regrets whatsoever.

G6.2: My challenges have been very hard, but at the end of the day...yeah...I am in the right spot!

KHogan: Glad to hear that G14.3

G7.3: I love what I do most days, but sometimes I do miss what I did in the past. I cannot see myself staying in the classroom for the next 20+ years, but I do love the education field.

G10.1: Yes, I absolutely love teaching. I am still learning every day, and it is not without its many challenges. But, there is nothing like the feeling of making a breakthrough with a student or teaching an awesome lesson. Makes all of the gray hairs worth it! :-)

KHogan: G7.3 would you go back to what you were doing or move into another aspect of education?

G12.3: I question the level that I chose to teach. The problems (math) that I'm dealing with are starting in the 5th grade. By the time they get to me it is almost a nightmare to bring them up to where they should be.

KHogan: G10.1 😊
KHogan : G12.3 is it more skill or performance gaps?

G7.3 : I'm not sure...I would love to combine the consulting work I did with the education field, but who knows!

G14.3 : I would move into another aspect of education. But, if this were not possible, I would try to stay in the non-profit arena, specializing in some area of education development as it relates to economics...still, I prefer teaching.

KHogan : Nice job guys and gals, thanks for the input...Does anyone else have anything to add before we move on?

G14.3 : No

G6.2 : nope

G12.3 : It's both, but remember, I'm dealing mostly with the remedial kids that have had issues with math since then. Some of them are in the position they are BECAUSE they are smart, quick kids and didn't feel they needed to pay attention to the teacher back then.

KHogan : Interesting perspective G12.3

KHogan : OK, then...Why might your experiences working with children and a desire to make a contribution to society be important in teacher retention?

G12.3 : To a new, young teacher? Or to old fogeys?

KHogan : 😊

KHogan : Any of the above will do

G7.3 : I think these motivations keep you going even when the job gets difficult. If you don't have these desires and chose to become a teacher because you thought it was easy or because you get a summer break, I don't see you lasting more than a few years. It's hard work!

KHogan : Yes it is!

G14.3 : There are several teachers out there who truly DO NOT like teenagers. Those teacher should NOT be teaching. It is impossible to get results because the kids at that age know when someone is faking. They know everytime. To be effective, you have to like them. Second, making a contribution to society means that you are patient enough to work with the kid who appears to not care at all. Just getting an honors kids into college with a nice letter or preparing someone to ace the AP exam is not as big a contribution as turning a kid around who almost didn't make it. Some are not willing to put in the time.

G14.3 : Some teachers I mean...not kids.
G23.2 : The job is a difficult one with days where you may see no results from your hard work. In my opinion if you don't come with a heart for the job you can be quickly disenchanted and burn out.

G24.1 : For me, the feeling that I have made a difference for at least one student at the end of the day is absolutely my motivation to keep going. Knowing that my students like being at school and that create that atmosphere of safety and learning for them. There are many days where it wasn't an academic difference that I made but an emotional one. It is not a career to be taken lightly and I think that is where many get discouraged when they realize how hard it really is.

G6.2 : I guess for me...I love a child’s outlook on life...I am brought back to reality on many I occasions by kids. Working with kids for me is the VERY DEFINITION of making a difference in the world

KHogan : G23.2 what does it mean to have a heart for the job?

G23.2 : Passion for the student

G12.3 : I think the issue of teacher retention isn't related all that much. I think the biggest issue with new teachers is that they have no idea what they are getting into and assume that their own personal experience as a student is what they will experience as a teacher.

KHogan : True

G12.3 : When they find it doesn't work that way they quickly get burned out.

G10.1 : That intrinsic desire to make a difference is key. This passion can change a teacher's outlook. Difficulties become interesting challenges instead of reasons to seek alternate career paths. I also think it is valuable to have had experience in another field. I know that the grass isn't always greener on the other side. You are just trading challenges and landscape. This definitely encourages me to stay the course!

KHogan : Interesting perspective. Do you think that might have to do with their teacher preparation program?

G14.3 : I agree with G12.3, but I wish that some would realize they shouldn't be there sooner. Several try to stay and push through to retirement. I need not point out that these are the most unpopular teachers.

G12.3 : If they don't have an internal motivation to teach, then the drive that gets them over the hump isn't there.

G14.3 : I also agree strongly with G10.1. Those with additional careers before teaching seem to do less whining in general. They seem to take the punches better and roll with the flexibility needed to do our job.
KHogan: So are you saying that some people choose to be a teacher because it is "easy"

G12.3: I still do consulting and that gives me a different perspective than if I only taught.

G14.3: I think many people think teaching is very easy. Go to work for less than 8 hours, give your papers to an aide to grade and get the summer off. THEY ARE CLUELESS!!

G7.3: I definitely think that a teacher preparation program can either present a realistic preview or gloss over the hard parts of the job.

G12.3: You have aides?? Wimp! (grin)

KHogan: Do you guys feel that many teachers go into teaching for the wrong reasons and that is why it is difficult for them

G24.1: I think they go in with false impressions about great hours, summers off, and vacations.
G23.2: I don’t think they go in for the wrong reason all the time. They may not have the life experience to know how truly difficult it is.

G14.3: I think that my program did not prepare me at all for what I had to do. I came up with my own approach after making all the mistakes I learned in my Alt Cert program.

KHogan: Very true...When did the reality of the job set in for you guys?

G24.1: I grew up with many teachers in my family. I stayed out of the traditional school setting for 10 years thinking it was not what I wanted. I knew all too well what the expectations for a great teacher were.

G23.2: I may just be hitting it this year. My first year everything was so new I just wanted to absorb it all and watch how everyone did things. This year I see the shortfalls of the different "systems" and get frustrated with seeing the same "mistakes"

KHogan: Very true G7.3...It's amazing what outside people believe we as teachers do.

G14.3: I have an aide for every period...when they show up. They are usually in the library finishing a last minute paper...every paper is a last minute paper...haha.

G6.2: I find it hard to judge others motivations...I work with almost all alt cert teachers...I listen a lot and find that many of them whine and complain as much as my previous careers...

KHogan: What areas did you feel were lacking in preparing you for your job as a teacher?

G6.2: I agree with above that alt cert program did no prepare me...I was not ready for the wide variety of problems that can come up in the blink of an eye,
G14.3: How to relate to the students, how much paperwork would be a waste of my time, how to play teacher politics on campus and basically what kids think is fun. Everything except how to look up curriculum and download worksheets.

G12.3: I mostly blew off, or blew through, the AltCert program. But I had many years of developing my own courses and teaching them at the corporate level. What I needed was info on the differences. I didn't get it.

G7.3: I don't feel that my program prepared me for the amount of time required every evening, knowing how to better teach to students who don't get it the first time, more of the nitty gritty of the job. I felt the program was very easy.

G10.1: The importance and role of assessments. Boy, was that a shock for this kindergarten teacher! I was lucky to have an amazing mentor teacher during my Region 10 experience. There were also some great instructors. Overall, I was pleased. I don't think anything prepares you fully for the first year, alt. cert or not.

G12.3: To be fair, I don't think I would have gotten that through a college based cert system either.

KHogan: Such as what differences?

G12.3: Adults are motivated, either internally or through fear of losing their job. Kids aren't motivated. My biggest weakness is finding out what I need to do to motivate a particular student.

KHogan: Thanks for the clarification!

KHogan: I want to go backwards a moment when some of you were speaking about teachers from previous careers whining less...Why do you guys think that those who had previous careers do less whining in general? And is it less whining over what areas of teaching/education?

G12.3: Less in general. After other careers you get to a point of just getting the job done and getting it over with. Whining just extends it and makes you feel bad.

G10.1: I don't know if I agree necessarily. My first year I didn't whine much because I didn't know better, but I have been known to whine a little bit when certain things don't seem fair for my students or me. Just being honest!

KHogan: Thanks for being honest.

G14.3: Well it could just be my campus that I am speaking about. I have only taught at one school. But, yes, I feel that those with education degrees and who have only taught as a career are less likely to incorporate new lessons or new technologies...or teach in an alternative fashion that does not mimic what they learned in college. Kids are not learning the same way and those entering the career now or those that had to use creativity in their previous career seem to do better given all the new demands for a changing classroom experience.
G7.3 : I think those of us from previous careers understand that although this job is extremely tiring and challenging in a variety of ways, you do not have the same type of pressure like you do in corporate America. You have a lot more control over your own classroom and it's rare to have someone breathing down your back. I know I am less concerned with losing my job in this area. I feel that a lot of times teachers complain about a lot of petty things. Maybe this is because it is primarily a bunch of us women together 😊?

KHogan : Good point G14.3

G14.3 : Of course there are always exceptions and yes I whine sometimes too, but I am talking about an absolute lack of flexibility.

G12.3 : G14 true, but what I'm finding is that with the loss of the 'old' methods and structures even less is being retained. Catering to the kids and they way THEY want it isn't getting the job done.

KHogan : G7.3, what do you mean by petty things?

G10.1 : G7.3 I still feel the same types of pressures that I felt in corporate America. My district is very rigorous. If my kids don't perform well on a benchmark test, I will have people in my classroom observing me.

KHogan : G12.3, who are you referring to when you say "they"?

G12.3 : the kids

G12.3 : and those that cater to the kids

G7.3 : When I say petty things, I am referring to teachers trying to outdo one another with their bulletin boards or complaining that PTA didn't do as much for them as they did last year. Complaining about things not being fair...it starts to sound like the students!

G14.3 : That might be true in other subjects, but in my economics room and my government room, I have even thrown out the book. We do things with games, simulations, ipods, youtube, facebook and even read the paper online. It's not so much that I'm giving in to what they want, I'm just feeding them the information in a way they like better. I think old school teaching methods are exacerbating their boredom in the classroom. Again, this might just be because I teach subjects that beg for current events and new technologies.

KHogan : thank you for the clarification

G12.3 : Yes, I had forgotten your subject. But the problem is that while that DOES work for you, it doesn't do didly for knowing theorems and postulates and so on and son.

KHogan : Nice discussion everyone.
G14.3 : I find that my student retain much more when I use a modern approach. I often hear from them in college, thanking me for preparing them and that they know more than many of their peers.

G6.2 : I agree with 12.3 modern approach doesn’t do much for learning to multiply

KHogan : G12.3 How do you go about teaching your students or deciding what strategies to use with them?

KHogan : G6.2 you can answer also

G12.3 : I try and make the math real. Math developed to solve real world problems, NOT as an intellectual exercise. That seems to have gotten lost.

G6.2 : Honestly...I have to let them teach me...I try a strategy...and if it works great...if not, I hit the books and ask every teacher I can find to come up with alternative.

KHogan : Great job everyone. Does anyone else have anything to add?

G6.2 : I am tireless when it comes to looking for a way to help a straggler understand

G14.3 : No

KHogan : Can you guys and gals talk to me about why the reduced work load would be an important reason as to why you might choose a non-university based alternative certification program?

G23.2 : I chose it due to the flexibility with my schedule and ability to take required classes in the sequence they were available - not a step by step order. Hope that's what you're asking...??

G12.3 : Time constraints and money. I already had two degrees and didn't feel like getting another.

G6.2 : ditto to 12.3

G14.3 : For me it wasn't a work load issue, it was strictly economic. I wanted to be able to pay off the fee over my first year. Also, I never realized I wanted to teach until later in life.

G24.1 : Most people that I went through the program with were working full or part time and had families. My program was flexible with day, evening and weekend classes. There was enough work assignments to know that you were getting the information and material that you needed, but not being overwhelmed with work.

G7.3 : Absolutely! By the time I decided to pursue a career in teaching, I had already spent 6 straight years getting my bachelor's and master's. I needed something that would allow me to get
started right away and be able to earn money considering I was at a point in life where I had responsibilities.

G10.1 : It seemed more practical. Since I was seeking a bilingual position, I knew it would be easier to get a job. Sometimes it seems that there is a stigma with alt. cert. I had friends that were having difficulties finding a job.

G7.3 : There definitely is a stigma.

KHogan : Can you guys speak more about the stigma?

G12.3 : I think the initial expectations are lower for an AltCert teacher, but if they can do the job the stigma goes away fast.

KHogan : why do you think that might be...the lower expectations I mean?

G12.3 : I'm not as up on all the math theory as someone going through a college program. But my real world practicality more than makes up for it.

G7.3 : Sure! I did all of my subbing, including an entire year long long-term sub position in a district that seemed to love me. They encouraged me and acted like they really wanted to hire me. When push came to shove, they were always leaning toward those who had had the "real" student teaching experience. It took someone taking a chance on me because of my past success.

G10.1 : There is this idea that because you didn't get your undergrad degree in education, you aren't part of the "club." There is a credibility factor missing. Perhaps it's because it takes less time to get the certification. Perhaps also because others question the motives of an alt. cert. teacher. Is this a teacher that truly does it for the kids or is doing it because they fear the loss of their current job or doesn't like what they are currently doing?

G7.3 : I think the lower expectation might be due to the fact that there doesn't seem to be a hierarchy yet of alt. cert. programs like there is with a college degree. They are pretty open to everyone.

KHogan : Interesting...What do you think it will take for administrators to take a chance on Alt. Cert. teachers? How can teacher preparation programs assist in this?

G7.3 : I completely agree with G10.1!

G6.2 : I teach in a district that is very pro Alt Cert –

G14.3 : I think it's because we don't know the vocabulary of a 'teacher'. We don't know the textbook answer to several problems. Still, I think something can be said for both kids of teachers. I am so much less organized than the degreed teachers, but I feel that the kids have a great time in my classroom. More like organized chaos which makes me look less professional then a college-educated teacher.
KHogan : OK...interesting discussion

KHogan : G6.2, Do you know what makes your district pro alt cert?

G12.3 : Admin asks the standard questions, college certs know the rote responses, altcerts don't

G7.3 : In education I have found that it is very much who you know that helps you get that foot in the door.

G6.2 : The administration is very involved with Region 10 I suppose...and I think they have had alot of success with those of us that have stayed past year 1

KHogan : Isn’t that true in any career, G7.3?

G10.1 : Really good alt cert teachers will change their perspective. And, alt. cert. programs need to be somewhat selective on who they admit to their program. Not just anyone should teach. I also think that alt cert programs should PR their top teachers...People should hear great success stories from the program.(That's the former publicist talking!)

G7.3 : Yes, but I feel in education it is more like the good ol' boys network. Credentials seem less important.

G12.3 : I tend to agree

G6.2 : I agree 10.1

KHogan : Where should alt. cert programs draw the line on admission requirements...How do you know if someone is going into teaching for the right reason?

G7.3 : I think they should use assessments as predictors and also interviews...maybe this is my past career talking now!

G6.2 : I'm not sure a program can know that. I thought I was teaching for the right reason, but didn't know it until I hit the classroom

G12.3 : you can't, but it shouldn't be a cattle call either.

G14.3 : I think there should be a longer period during which those alt cert teachers can be asked to resign. I think that they should be observed more than what I experienced in my first year.

G12.3 : I may be wrong, but don't they end up making money on the cert process (i.e. not breaking even or losing money)

G12.3 : regional hubs, I mean

KHogan : Nice discussion everyone!
G10.1: That's a tough one. I don't know how you get inside the brain or heart of a potential teacher to know their true intentions. But, I would make sure there is an essay, interview, and reference portion of the process (which I think there already is). I think that observations are critical. I was observed sooo much my first year! Between my mentor and consultant, it was crazy!!

KHogan: We are nearing the end and I have one last question. You guys have been doing a fabulous job.

G12.3: In my last conference with my Reg10 evaluator, she told me that I was starting out with the same perspectives and attitudes that she had when she decided to retire. She wished me luck, with a very wry smile.

KHogan: Job placement, classroom management, mentoring, and lesson planning were top themes listed for both strengths and weaknesses of the alternative certification program, tell me more about why these might be either a strength or weakness?

G6.2: big question

G6.2: Mentoring - I firmly believe that teachers should have mentors...not just first year

G12.3: I didn't find them that strong, but that was more due to my background. I would probably say that for most, they weren't strong enough. Most of my teachers during the cert process were elementary teachers. They had NO clue what went on at the secondary level.

G14.3: Job placement was helpful. Although I did most of the hard work myself, it helped that many people at Region 10 know many others out there already teaching or hiring. Classroom management in an alt cert program is a joke. Mentoring was helpful...probably the most, but that was a product of my campus teacher and the programs that my school offered internally. Lesson planning was helpful when it came time to be observed, but is not as helpful when 38 faces are staring at you to keep them entertained. Sometimes, most of the time, you have to think and act off the cuff no matter what your lesson plans say.

G24.1: In my program, I was not assisted with job placement, but would have appreciated that. I felt like my classes prepared me well for handling classroom management, although I had quite a bit of prior experience. My mentor/advisor that was assigned to me by Region 10 was great. She was always available to me and visited my classroom monthly. I had experience writing curriculum, so lesson planning was not a challenge for me. I will also credit training there because we were assigned many lesson plans in various classes using a variety of resources throughout the program.

G7.3: The alt cert program did very little to help with job placement, other than the one job fair that was very unsuccessful. I agree with G6.2...mentors can be treasures...I am lucky to have a good one in my district, but my R10 mentor was not helpful. Lesson planning to me was a weakness...we were only taught what a formal lesson plan looks like, but that is not realistic.
There is not the time to write one of those for every lesson. It would have been helpful to have a more realistic view.

G10.1 : I will speak to classroom management. If you don't have a well-run classroom, you don't have anything. I have great classroom mgmt days and downright horrible ones. If it is not functioning, they can't learn. I do feel that this was a weakness of the program. I wish I would have seen more examples of exemplary classroom management. Instead of receiving a powerpoint about the subject, I would have liked to see video of a real life scenario or heard from a star teacher that described her approach to classroom management.

G23.2 : I was connected in my school district so I never utilized job placement. We covered a great deal of classroom management, but until you are right in there you have no idea what you'll need. Post classroom experience and classroom management would be good. The team I am working on are great mentors - better than alt cert mentoring or district mentoring. Also our district has great Science curriculum that provides lessons yet allows room for outside information. I did receive great references for lesson planning from my classes and still pull on some of that.

G12.3 : Effectively, I haven't had a mentor at any of the schools I've been at. From my perspective, that was a good thing. I didn't need the hand holding. Other teachers, alt or college based did.

G7.3 : I agree with the comments on classroom management...not enough real examples!

G6.2 : Classroom management is still a mystery to me some days. I think it is something that I will work on every day of my career. I did not get as much from the program as I developed from my own experience. Lesson planning is also a learned skill. I write plans on a weekly basis and find myself changing them as needed and based on what new tools I find. Again..I have learned through experience

G10.1 : As for the mentorship piece of the program, I had a wonderful Region 10 mentor. I can't say enough positive things about her. She has made me a better teacher through her encouragement and support.

G7.3 : I have learned so much from others...I wish there was more observation time.

G12.3 : G6 Experience always has been the best teacher, if you are willing to listen to her.

G6.2 : 😊

G12.3 : I think the biggest thing about any cert program is that sooner or later you have to get thrown into the deep end and swim. Until that happens, all you have is words and anecdotes.

G6.2 : very very true

G7.3 : Very true
G7.3 : I think the biggest thing we miss out on is the student teaching experience.

G10.1 : G12.3...it certainly is baptism by fire.

KHogan : So would you say the alt cert program was beneficial to you guys and gals because you received the basic information and then were able to make it your own?

G6.2 : yes

G7.3 : Yes, I still wouldn't change my decision about the program I chose. The good outweighs the bad.

G14.3 : I think it was a means to an end. If I wanted to teach, I had to do it. I think I would have done just as well with less instruction and more in-the-class experience.

KHogan : Nice...Back to the mentoring conversation...You have all mentioned what would help in the alt cert program when learning about lesson planning and classroom management, but what makes for a good mentor?

G12.3 : I question a lot of the info I was given. I used the program to get where I wanted to be.

G12.3 : telling what is, instead of what they think it should be.

G14.3 : My mentor is now one of my closest friends. He helped me so much and has always been there for me over and over again. I feel this is the mark of a good administrator knowing which teachers on campus would make the best mentors. He is the only reason I survived.

G12.3 : kill the politics and get down to the meat.

G24.1 : I think I would have been adequately trained, but I know I would have stressed over them a lot more without my experience.

G23.2 : Working in the grade and possibly the subject you're in. I was assigned a district mentor that was a reading specialist in K-2. Not my world.

G7.3 : A good mentor is someone who is encouraging, who gives good feedback, and who is available to really discuss the issues...not someone who just drops by from time to time to do a quick eval and leaves. That is not very helpful. I think the person needs to develop the relationship with the mentee.

G24.1 : My assigned mentor/advisor took an active interest in me and my class. She was a retired elementary teacher, so she had a passion for the children. She is assigned to teachers on my campus again this year and comes by to still check on me. I know that she cares about fostering my career, and was not there just to get me through my first year.
G6.2: What I liked about my mentor...she listened when I struggled...and pointed me in the right direction to find solutions...and listened when I struggled...and shared strategies...

G7.3: someone who is not judgmental

G10.1: I was a deer in headlights when I first started. My mentor drew out the good with encouragement. She was just like an outstanding teacher, she asked me good questions: why do you think this lesson faltered at this point? do you like it when the kids do xyz? how could you work on xyz? She guided me and got me there on my own without judging me or my ability. She is an excellent teacher, which makes her an excellent mentor.

G14.3: Oh and mine was also alt cert so that helped. He defended me to the administration and the other teachers. He also helped me break down the parts so that I wasn't too overwhelmed all the time. Most important...he calmed me down when I really didn't need to be crazy. Tough love worked.

G7.3: Are you all talking about mentors within your campus or R10 mentors?

G12.3: both

G6.2: As a mentor...I entertain no fantasies of solving problems...but I can offer suggestions and just someone to lean on those really tough days.

G14.3: I am talking about my campus mentor, I never knew a Region 10 mentor.

G10.1: I'm referencing my R10 mentor, who also works at my school.

G7.3: Wow...you are lucky!

KHogan: Nice answers...Does anyone else have anything to add before we wrap up this session?

G12.3: reg10 are a bit less politically correct. Having said that, I was in a VERY political school system. So take it with 10 lbs of salt!

G14.3: No

KHogan: Well I want to thank you all again for participating in this focus group and helping me finish my dissertation requirements...We had some great discussions...I want to remind you all that you will all be entered into a drawing for an Amazon.com gift card. The winner will be announced no later than Friday December 11, 2009...THANK YOU AGAIN! 👍

G23.2: hope I was helpful for your research.

G24.1: I cannot think of anything. If there is anything else that I can help you in your research, just let me know.
G23.2 : just in time for one of those wonderful teacher breaks!

G14.3 : You are most welcome.

G7.3 : Thank you! Let me know if you need anything else!

G6.2 : You are welcome!!

G6.2 : good luck
G10.1 : You are welcome!

G12.3 : de nada

G23.2 : g'nite

KHogan : 😊

G24.1 : Thank you for offering that. You know how to convince a teacher to help! Good luck on your research!

KHogan : 😊
REFERENCES


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