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# The relationship between perceived preparedness, efficacy and special education training

Leslie Haley Wasserman  
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2010

ABSTRACT

The Relationship Between Perceived Preparedness, Efficacy and Special Education  
Training

by

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M. Ed, Indiana University of PA, 1988  
B.S. in Ed, Indiana University of PA, 1987

Research Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Education

Walden University  
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## ABSTRACT

Limited information exists on early childhood first year teachers' training for accommodations for diverse student abilities in classrooms. This mixed methods sequential explanatory study examined the self-efficacy of 28 first year early childhood teachers from Midwest urban schools. Vygotsky's social learning theory and Gardner's multiple intelligences were used as the conceptual framework. Email survey data were collected and analyzed using a *t*-test to answer the quantitative questions on the relationship between perceived efficacy and type of and amount of special education training provided in preservice programs. Qualitative questions on self-efficacy to instruct diverse students within the regular classroom were examined using interviews with 28 first year teachers and analyzed for patterns and themes. Quantitative results indicated no relationship between perceived efficacy and amount of special education training provided in preservice programs. Qualitative analysis revealed that teachers with perceived high efficacy were more prepared through university preparation to work with diverse students in the classroom than those teachers who perceived themselves to have low efficacy with such students. This study contributes to social change by providing insight into requirements for effective preservice diversity training of early childhood teachers. The qualitative aspect of this study supports other research for more special education training that would be beneficial for preservice early childhood teachers along with better placements in field experiences that include inclusive classrooms. Higher education can improve teacher education programs by implementing such changes that will improve education for all children and make early childhood educators better able to attend to all students' needs.



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## DEDICATION

To my parents, James and Joan Haley, for instilling the importance of education, for believing in me, and shaping my personality to do anything that I set my mind to do. To my family, my husband Dave, and children, Timothy (TJ), Haley, and Sarah for allowing me the time away from them while spending hours on my computer to complete my education. Without your support, I would not have been able to accomplish this dream.

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## CHAPTER 1:

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

As more schools begin to use full inclusion instead of resource rooms for their students with disabilities, teachers must increasingly be trained to meet the diverse needs of their students. Yet a gap exists in the literature regarding the ways in which teachers may be adequately prepared for this demand. This study of teacher efficacy and level of preparation to work with students with disabilities in the regular classroom was conducted to help to fill the gap in the research over the last decade and a half. This study also provides curriculum recommendations for preservice teachers, so that they may leave higher education prepared to teach in classrooms where students with disabilities are included full time.

#### Background for Problem of the Study

In 1975, PL 94-142 made it possible for students with disabilities to be educated in a general education class, and demanded that teachers meet the needs of a diverse population of students with different needs. Indeed, it has become necessary for all first year early childhood teachers to understand how to work in an inclusive classroom, and meet the physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of their children. Yet limited research exists on early childhood first year teachers' efficacy to meet these needs. In addition, limited research exists on the teacher training available to accommodate diverse student abilities.

Teacher efficacy has been studied in relation to teachers' sense of control (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Changes in teacher efficacy during the early years of teaching

(Woolfolk & Hoy, 2000) discussed the importance of teacher efficacy and how it should continue to grow as the teacher gains more knowledge and experience. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) created a quantitative instrument to measure teachers' efficacy, which was used in this study. A year later, Woolfolk-Hoy and Milner (2002) examined teacher efficacy in an African American teacher (one of the three on staff) who worked in a suburban school. Woolfolk-Hoy and Milner (2002) examined the role of her efficacy on her teaching in an unsupported environment. Because teacher efficacy is the subject of this dissertation, Woolfolk-Hoy and Milner's study provided an important foundation for the ways in which an individual teacher may feel in the classroom, and the factors that impact her efficacy. These quantitative studies along with the qualitative case study on efficacy are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

A collaborative model of education for the global world was recently developed in a study of early childhood teachers (Landerholm, Gehrie, & Yao, 2003). This model emphasizes the importance of working with a variety of collaborative partnerships, and incorporated curriculum changes, technology, evaluation, and the development of long- and short-term international experiences for the early childhood students. This model provides guidance for early childhood educators. Other research has detailed the ways in which partnerships can benefit university coursework, such as field experiences by encouraging collaboration between public schools and the university educators (Landerholm et al, 2003).

Teacher efficacy has also been found to increase mentor teacher efficacy (Saffold, 2005). This research found that teacher efficacy increased along with the efficacy of the

veteran teachers in their schools who were their mentors. Saffold also found that the efficacy is especially important in urban schools since the teachers are leaving at a rate of 50 percent after their first year of teaching. The teachers for this study are teachers from urban schools and this research has valuable information about not only teacher efficacy but also teacher efficacy in urban schools.

Other researchers have examined the predictors of change in preservice teachers' efficacy (Wagler & Mosely, 2005; Yeh, 2006; Yoon, 2006). Yoon (2006) explored using cases and case methods in influencing preservice elementary science teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The study showed that scaffolding and prior knowledge impacted participants' self-efficacy beliefs. It was also found that multimedia cases helped the preservice teachers with their confidence by having more immediate access to teaching with this valuable instructional tool. In this current study, the information gleaned shows that preservice teachers' experiences are positively correlated with their comfort working in the actual classroom when they experience obstacles.

Yeh (2006) also discussed the importance of computer-simulated training programs on preservice teachers' efficacy. The computer- simulated program helps the preservice teachers to reflect on their personal traits and guided practices as they improve their personal teaching efficacy before they begin their student teaching. From these findings, Yeh argued for more research on teacher growth via computer- based training. Some universities use the simulated experience since there is little opportunity for the students to work "hands on" in classrooms since the university may not have enough schools to place students in for real classroom experience. Wagler and Mosely (2005)

researched the effects of secondary education methods course and student teaching on the preservice teachers' efficacy about teaching, and found no significant change in preservice teachers' efficacy from the methods course. There was also a drop in efficacy during student teaching. It was recommended that field experiences be added in to the methods course to help the students connect the experience to the methods being taught. Wagler and Mosely also found little literature in the secondary field namely from teacher education; they also found the elementary preservice teaching experience and the secondary preservice teaching experience to be very opposite since elementary preservice teaching consists of almost twice the amount of teaching time in the field before student teaching. The data gleaned from the elementary studies are not applicable to the secondary field of education. Wagler and Mosely's study is important since it shows that the way early childhood educators are taught is dramatically different from the way secondary educators are taught since early childhood educators require more methods courses than secondary educators require. The findings from Wagler and Mosely supports the theory that early childhood teachers should be the ones to teach in early childhood classrooms as they are specifically trained to be teachers of young children.

#### Importance of Study

This study is important because preservice students may be unprepared for their first year of teaching (Clifford et al., 2005). Indeed, a recent study revealed that only 40% of bachelor's programs required a course in educating and working with special needs children (Change, Early, & Winston, 2005). Others have found many regular education teachers to be ill prepared for the inclusive classroom (Smith & Smith, 2000). These

findings suggest that improvement is needed in regulating the standards in early childhood education preparation program, especially as the movement to full inclusion continues in the school systems.

State universities in Ohio have a course or two for early childhood preservice teachers about special education (Ohio Department of Education); however, because students entering the regular classrooms have specific needs, many regular classroom teachers feel unprepared for the challenges that having inclusion can bring (Gargiulo, Sluder, & Streitenberger, 1997).

In this study, I reviewed research on the efficacy of first year early childhood teachers and their preparedness for the diverse populations within the classroom. I gathered data on the perceptions of first year early childhood teachers' efficacy, their special education training, and their perceived preparedness for meeting the diverse needs of their students. Much existing research has been quantitative; this study will add both qualitative and quantitative measures to the field. Moreover, existing research has focused on the efficacy and preparation of teachers who work with children with disabilities; however, no studies have examined the relationship between teacher efficacy and preparation among teachers working with children with disabilities. This study contributes to the literature by addressing these gaps.

#### Problem Statement

There is approximately 45% of first year early childhood educators are not prepared to meet the diverse population of students' needs in their classrooms (Castle, 1996; Walbeck et al., 2003), particularly in the inclusive classroom (Chang, et al., 2005).

Not all curricula from institutions of higher learning prepare them adequately for this task (Walbeck et al., 2003). At least 50 percent of first year early childhood teachers rely heavily on the intervention specialist for assistance (Garguilo et al., 1997). This problem has an impact on the teachers, the intervention specialists, and the students when the teacher does not have the proper background to teach the students using one's own training (Snell, Lowman, & Canady, 1996). Many possible factors contribute to this problem, among which are ineffective college curriculum, limited preparation on the preservice teachers' academics, lack of training in special education, and limited service learning or field experience as an undergraduate (Smith & Smith, 2000; Van Laarhoven et al., 2007). Other factors include ineffective expectations for the first year early childhood teachers by the school or place of employment by not giving the teachers enough information during the new teacher training and orientation (Walbeck et al., 2003). This study contributes to the body of knowledge by identifying the relationship between teacher efficacy in working with diverse learners during their first year of teaching and their preservice teacher preparation in that area, level of special education training, and by identifying the level of preparation needed for a first early childhood educator to be successful teaching in an inclusive classroom with a diverse population.

#### Nature of the Study

This sequential explanatory strategy study was conducted with the use of surveys, interviews, and three questions about special education training. The rationale of doing a mixed methods study was to use the strength of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses in another method. The design of this mixed methods study was sequential

explanatory strategy utilizing both the nonequivalency posttest only groups for the OSTES survey, MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006), three questions about special education training, along with phenomenological research. Data were gathered using a variety of instruments including the OSTES survey, the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006), three questions about special education training, and an interview. It was conducted over a period of several weeks.

Table 1

*Sequential Explanatory Flow Chart*

Method	Research Question	How the data are collected
Quantitative	1. What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?	OSTES Survey Preparedness: MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006)
Quantitative	2. What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?	Special education training: 3 questions added to OSTES survey. Preparedness: MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006)
Qualitative	3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?	Interview questions: 1. What opportunity did you have to have field experience in an inclusive classroom? 2. What did you gain from this experience?

*(table continues)*

Method	Research Question	How the data was collected
Qualitative	4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?	<p>3. What type of field experience did you have with diverse learners?</p> <p>4. What did you gain from working with diverse workers?</p> <p>5. In what grade did you do your student teaching?</p> <p>6. What was the make-up of the classroom's diverse needs?</p> <p>7. What support did you receive from you cooperating teacher in working with diverse learners?</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Interview questions:</p> <p>1. How well do you feel that your university fully prepared you to teach in an inclusive classroom? Explain.</p> <p>2. What were your initial feelings when you started working with diverse learners while at the university or in the classroom?</p> <p>3. How do you feel about working with children with diverse needs now?</p> <p>4. What difficulties did you have adapting to the diverse needs of your students initially?</p> <p>5. How adequate was the special education training you received from your university now that you are working in your own classroom?</p>
Qualitative	5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?	<p style="text-align: center;">Interview questions:</p> <p>1. How do you feel about working with children with diverse needs now?</p>

*(table continues)*

Method	Research Question	How the data was collected
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. What types of diverse needs are addressed among the children that you teach in your classroom?</li> <li>3. What did you do to make it easier to adapt to working with diverse learners? What difficulties did you have adapting to the diverse needs of your students now that you are at the end of the school year?</li> <li>4. What kind of support do you receive from support staff? What kind of support staff (aide, paraprofessional, intervention specialist, etc.)?</li> <li>5. Is there an intervention specialist assigned to help you with your class?</li> <li>6. What kind of assistance do you receive from an intervention specialist?</li> <li>7. How many students are on a 504 plan?</li> <li>8. How many students have identified needs and are on IEPs.</li> <li>9. How many students have unidentified needs?</li> <li>10. What is your class size?</li> <li>11. What has been your biggest obstacle with working in an inclusive classroom?</li> <li>12. Is there anything further that you would like to share about working in your inclusive classroom? Successes and/or frustrations?</li> </ol>

## Methodology

Twenty-eight first year early childhood teachers from Midwest urban schools in Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan were sent surveys about teacher efficacy. The principals at these schools gave me the contact information of the teachers. I then sent teachers a variety of surveys (OSTES survey, the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006), and three questions about special education training (quantitative) via e-mail.

The surveys were placed in three different sets (low, medium, and high) based on the efficacy score of the OSTES survey before being randomly selected using a random number generator. Four participants from each set were selected to continue with the study for the interview section of the study. The interview was structured around the three qualitative research questions.

My role as the researcher was to conduct interviews of participants, transcribe and analyze the transcripts, collect data, tabulate information from the checklists and surveys, and conduct the data analysis.

For the quantitative element of this study, there were two surveys and three questions about special education training sent to a specific sample of 28 first year early childhood teachers from the school district. The OSTES survey instrument for first year early childhood teachers determined teachers' self-efficacy. The levels of preparedness about teaching in the inclusive classroom was determined by the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006). There were three questions about special education training added to the end of the OSTES. The three questions determined each teacher's level of

special education training. The first survey is a new measure of teacher efficacy, the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES), offering validity and reliability data from three separate studies, which is sometimes referred to as the OSU scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). The reliability and validity of these instruments are reported in chapter 3. The data from the OSTES survey were calculated and entered into SPSS software to run a *t* test. The data collected from the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) were calculated through an independent sample *t* test with the results of the OSTES scale. The following questions added to the OSTES about special education training:

1. How many credits have you taken in special education?
2. How many hours of field experience have you completed?
3. How many hours in special education training have you taken through the school district?

The numbers were summed and analyzed through an independent sample *t* test with the preparedness total of the participants.

The surveys were placed in three different sets (low, medium, and high) based on the efficacy score of the OSTES survey before being randomly picked using a purposive random number generator. Four participants from each set were picked to continue with the study. I conducted individual interviews with the teachers based on the three research questions, as listed below. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were tape recorded for accuracy. I transcribed all of the answers and tabulated

the results. The information was then coded. I was responsible for the collection and analysis of data along with the sharing of data with appropriate individuals.

The purpose of this sequential explanatory strategy study was to determine the efficacy and level of preparedness of first year early childhood teachers from Midwest urban school districts for the diverse population they teach based on their experiences within the inclusive early childhood classroom. The central phenomenon is generally described as early childhood teacher preparation.

#### Research Questions

The central research question is the following: How do first year early childhood teachers describe their learning experiences in special education and will their preservice training and field experiences enable them to make adaptations to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their inclusive classroom?

The following quantitative subquestions were examined:

1. What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?
2. What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

The following qualitative subquestions were examined:

3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?

4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?
5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?

These subquestions center on the central phenomenon of teacher training/teacher education. The population of interest is first year early childhood teachers from Midwest urban school districts.

#### Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's social learning theory is the conceptual framework for this study with a concentration on scaffolding. Using the constructivist tool of scaffolding enables first year early childhood teachers to have a clear understanding of the early childhood theories that have an impact on the education of students and to apply knowledge gained from higher education to their classroom to be effective teachers. First year early childhood teachers need to be aware of and implement many different teaching styles and strategies to accommodate the different learning styles of students in classrooms. Gardner's multiple intelligences theory was an important aspect for this area of inquiry.

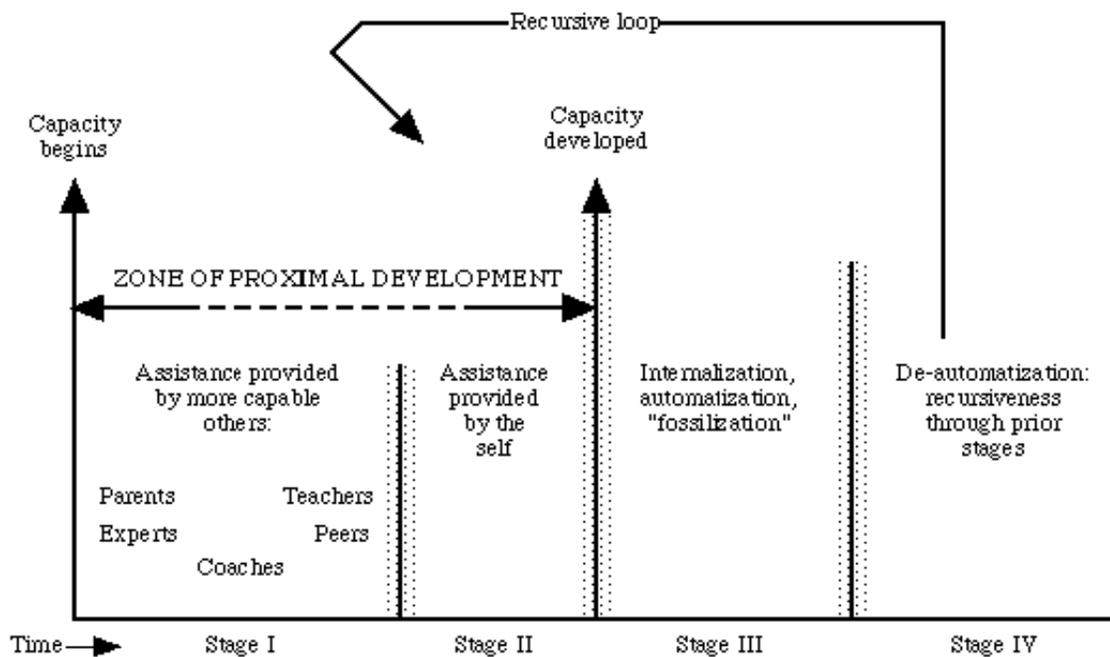
Vygotsky's theories brought about changes by upgrading Piaget's theories to improve and increase the way children's development is viewed (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivists believe in a hands-on theory of development that promotes using a curricula customized to the student's prior knowledge. Even though Vygotsky approached development differently from Piaget, he still had many similarities to Piaget's

theories based on social knowledge, especially his work with Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, Cole et al., 1978). Vygotsky believed that development begins at birth and ends in death (Vygotsky, van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). Vygotsky constructed the social development theory of learning when he discovered that within a group of children who were at the same developmental level, there were children that were not able to learn as quickly as the other children who only needed little assistance. This social learning theory was the keystone of his work.

Scaffolding and reciprocal teaching are effective strategies to access the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is the distance between the most difficult task that a child can do alone and the most difficult task a child can do with help (Vygotsky, Cole et al., 1978). Vygotsky called the theory of assistance by a peer or teacher scaffolding (Vygotsky, van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). Scaffolding works by starting with a base of knowledge and building upon it layer by layer. The idea behind scaffolding is to provide direct instruction to provide a framework of learning and then be able to transition from the scaffold to independent instruction.

The theory of human intelligence, developed by Gardner suggested that originally there were eight different kinds of intelligence. Intelligence was considered much more than an IQ because even though an individual has a high IQ score, the individual may not be able to process information or be a problem solver. Gardner established several different types of criteria to define intelligence. Gardner defined intelligence as a group of abilities that was somewhat autonomous from other human capacities; had a core set of information-processing operations; had a distinct history in the stages of development we

each pass through, and had plausible roots in evolutionary history (Gardner, 1993). To qualify as an intelligence, the particular area must meet eight criteria that were devised from logical analysis, developmental psychology, experimental psychology, biological sciences, and psychometrics. The eight criteria were:



*Figure 1. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development*

From *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*, by R.G. Tharp and R. Gallimore, 1988. In North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, "Four Stage Model of ZPD," n.d. Retrieved January 20, 2007, from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/learning/lr1zpd.htm>

1. The potential for brain isolation by brain damage

2. Its place in evolutionary history
3. The presence of core operations
4. Susceptibility to encoding
5. A distinct developmental progression
6. The existence of idiot-savants, prodigies, and other exceptional people
7. Support from experimental psychology, and
8. Support from psychometric findings. (Gardner, 1999, p. 36)

From these eight criteria, Gardner defined eight intelligences (Gardner, 1993). Each of these eight intelligences has a specific set of abilities that could be observed and measured (Gardner, 1999). In Appendix A, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences can be found. Gardner brought about breakthrough changes since he developed the theory of having more than one type of intelligence. His theory was a new way of thinking about the way that people learn.

Vygotsky's scaffold theory used the child's prior experiences and uses the information as a base of the scaffold. As the child learns, more layers of the framework are built upon the existing layer of knowledge. The new knowledge is built upon the old knowledge until the new knowledge is understood and then the framework continues. This continues until the child is able to take the information and use it independently. The goal of scaffolding is to have the child become an independent thinker based on the information gained from the scaffold (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, it is important for the preservice teacher to have scaffolding present throughout their college training and field experiences. The college professor begins the scaffolding with theories and field experiences. The cooperating teacher and college supervisor continue the scaffolding with the preservice teacher until the preservice teacher is able to complete the task independently (Winsler, 2003).

Preservice teachers also need to have many different kinds of skills in order to be successful in the classroom. Teachers must teach the students using a variety of strategies. Gardner's multiple intelligences play an important part of the diverse, inclusive classroom. Because each child learns in a different way, the teacher needs to know different ways to teach the material so that he or she is able to teach to the children's learning style.

#### Operational Definition of Terms

*Bracketing:* Setting aside or suspending any perceptions or learned feelings the research may have formulated related to the phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 364)

*Diverse population:* Variation between individuals in the population (Brazzel, 1991). A diverse population within an early childhood classroom will consist of children with differing abilities. The academic abilities can range from giftedness to developmentally delayed students. The children can also have disabilities that fall under the categories of: academic, physical, or emotional.

*Early Childhood:* Children aged birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade- 8 yrs. old (National Association for the Education of Young Children -NAEYC).

*Efficacy:* People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes (Bandura, 1994).

*Environment:* The set up of the physical classroom environment to foster optimal growth and development (inside and out); the culture that an individual lives in, works in, and the people and institutions with whom they interact within the classroom (High/Scope, 2007).

*Inclusion:* Inclusion is a term that expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). Proponents of inclusion generally favor newer forms of education service delivery (Phi Delta Kappa's Center for Evaluation, 2007).

*Inclusive classroom:* Education of students with disabilities in general education settings (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004). Inclusive classroom means that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers, and support staff. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) was passed in 1975 stating that students need to be educated in the environment that is least restrictive for their specific learning needs. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its 1997 amendments make it clear that schools have a duty to educate children with disabilities in general education classrooms. The students still receive services in the resource room if they require additional assistance in an academic area(s). An inclusive classroom contains students with a diverse population of needs.

*Full inclusion:* Full inclusion means that all students, regardless of handicapping condition or severity, will be in a regular classroom/program full time. All services must be taken to the child in that setting (Phi Delta Kappa's Center for Evaluation, 2007).

*Mainstream:* Generally, mainstreaming has been used to refer to the selective placement of special education students in one or more "regular" education classes. Proponents of mainstreaming generally assume that a student must "earn" his or her opportunity to be placed in regular classes by demonstrating an ability to "keep up" with the work assigned by the regular classroom teacher. This concept is closely linked to traditional forms of special education service delivery (Phi Delta Kappa's Center for Evaluation, 2007).

*Preparedness:* The feeling of being prepared to face meet many of the challenges currently being faced in the classroom (National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education, 2008).

### Assumptions

I assumed that the first year early childhood teachers shared the same type of course work in their university training. In several of the states, especially Ohio, there is control by the state over what teacher education curriculum is to be taught in public universities. Within the Midwest region, most of the hires in these states would most likely have taken their degrees in state. In Ohio, many of these teachers are struggling to find jobs due to economic downturns and thus are going across the state lines to Kentucky and Michigan.

I also assumed that teachers gave honest and accurate responses to the surveys and interview questions. In order to promote this honesty, confidentiality was preserved. The participants in the study were volunteers and were permitted to withdraw from the study at any time with no ramifications.

### Scope, Delimitations, and Limitations

#### *Scope and Delimitations*

This sequential explanatory study focused on first year early childhood teachers who teach in Midwest urban schools. Teacher efficacy and preparedness were analyzed to determine the level of special education training needed for a first early childhood educator to be successful teaching in an inclusive classroom with a diverse population.

Those ineligible for participation in this study were first year early childhood teachers who do not teach in the Midwest urban schools. The school districts' first year early childhood teachers were chosen to participate. This study limited the sample to Midwest urban school districts. Only certified teachers of early childhood (pre-k-3<sup>rd</sup> grade) were studied who have special education training and/or early childhood training.

#### *Limitations*

The limitation of this study is the small size of the sample. Due to economical setbacks, the Midwest school districts are experiencing hiring freezes, and Ohio school districts are experiencing particular difficulties due to failing school levies. Due to this hiring freeze, there were much fewer teachers that were eligible to participate and fewer still that were interested in participating in the study. This small sample size limited the results to a very small number instead of a wider range of beliefs.

### Significance of the Study

Outside the bounds of this study, results may facilitate improvements in future teacher education programs, and may narrow the gap between early childhood intervention specialists (special education teachers) and regular early childhood education teachers.

Results of this study will be beneficial to social change for researchers, higher education educators and leaders and students with special needs. These findings may facilitate better preparation for preservice teachers so that they may teach more successfully in the inclusive classroom during their first year of teaching. These findings may also lead to better teacher preparedness for the inclusive classroom by promoting more field experience in special education and inclusive classes before student teaching. Furthermore, findings could support better guidelines for the higher education curriculum regarding special education training, which could also support the need for more professional development in schools.

### Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the relevant research for this study, and outlined my purpose, research questions, and methodology. In chapter 2, I will discuss the conceptual and theoretical frameworks on teacher education, and the research examining the training resources preservice teachers need to become effective teachers. I will also discuss the methodological approaches used in the study. Chapter 3 will provide the details related to the methodology of the study; chapter 4 will provide the results, and chapter 5 the conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review encompasses themes relevant to first year early childhood teachers, including the undergraduate training they received to teach in an inclusive classroom. Current research has addressed specific aspects of teacher efficacy in particular populations; this study will provide a more inclusive approach to the study of teacher efficacy by examining first year early childhood teachers and their preparation for the diverse needs of the population that they teach.

This review includes three major themes: early childhood education teacher preparation in preservice education for working in the inclusive classroom; early childhood education teacher efficacy during the first years of teaching; and the influence of Vygotsky and Gardner in early childhood education. The review also includes a discussion on the mixed methods sequential design used in the study.

This review was compiled from books, dissertations, and related studies from peer-reviewed journals. ERIC, EBSCO, ProQuest, and other data bases were a major source for the research. Online search parameters included various combinations of the following search terms: *early childhood teachers, teacher education, first year teachers, teacher efficacy, diverse classrooms, inclusive classrooms, inclusion, early childhood intervention specialist, special education, preservice teacher preparation, student teachers, special needs, NCLB, Vygotsky, Gardner, and diversity of learners.*

### Introduction

This study was created to close the gap in literature about teacher efficacy, level of preparedness, and the level of training of special education/special needs courses for

early childhood teachers. Are first year early childhood teachers prepared for the diverse population within their classrooms? Chapter 2 will introduce the literature of teacher education, teacher efficacy, and teacher training for inclusive classrooms. This chapter will conclude with a summation of recommended teacher preparation for success within an inclusive classroom to meet the needs of the diverse students.

Not long ago, teachers were educated either as regular classroom teachers or as special education teachers (Castle, 1996). Regular classroom teachers, at that time, had little training on educating children with special needs, because children with disabilities were taught in a resource room (Castle). Special education teachers were primarily responsible for the education for children with disabilities. In the 21st century, this division is still evident for many classroom teachers (Lee & Powell, 2005-2006). The level of special education training differs across universities and states (Castle). This variability is evident in teacher levels of comfort in an inclusive environment: Empirical research has found that not all teachers feel comfortable in an inclusive classroom (Lee & Powell). Information on what states require special education training for early childhood education was not consistent and difficult to find.

Many regular education teachers are ill prepared for the inclusive classroom (Smith & Smith, 2000). In a qualitative study conducted by Smith and Smith regular education early childhood teachers' perceptions of factors that contributed to or hindered their success in inclusive classroom was explored. The analysis of the interviews of the data indicated a strong belief in the fundamental value of inclusion as well as four reoccurring themes.

The themes indicated a need for: more adequate and focused training (for both regular and special education personnel), better consideration of classroom load factors (including class size, ratios, and type and severity of special needs), more reliable support (in-class, collaborative, and administrative), and help to find more time to meet the increased planning and collaborative demands of the inclusive classrooms. (Smith & Smith, 2000, p. 1)

These themes are important to this study because university training plays a big part in teacher preparedness and are therefore a part of the interview section of this study. The classroom load consideration is also important for teachers toward their preparedness since they have students with diverse needs in their classrooms. Having more reliable support from the staff in the form of a paraprofessional, aide, and other colleagues is very important to teacher preparedness since each teacher needs a support system of some kind to help to alleviate the work load. The last of the themes is one of the most important aspects of preparedness since teachers need to have enough time to be able to collaborate and prepare plans with other teachers involved with their students. Teachers need to be able to discuss objectives for the lessons that will affect the students and what strategies will work best for what they have planned. All of these aspects fall under preparedness.

According to new research published in the *Journal of Early Intervention* (2006):

While the majority of preschool classrooms have at least one child with a disability, teachers often have little or no training in education caring for these children. A survey of those overseeing early childhood teacher preparation programs reveal that even though early intervention and special education is part of many programs' missions, coursework and training often fall short. (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2006, p. 2)

Teacher preparation is an important component of high quality teacher education programs. The finding of the study conducted by Chang, et al., (2006) shows the

importance of having the early childhood teacher education programs in higher education be sure that the programs and the curriculum are providing the needed foundations so that the graduates work with children with disabilities as undergraduates to better prepare them to serve the children that they teach.

Preservice teachers not only need to have the necessary foundations from their education, they also have many other insights about their teaching. Teacher efficacy plays a major role in how the teacher thinks about teaching and how they feel as a teacher. Preservice teachers need to be able to understand the curriculum (Castle, 1996), have a full understanding of the standards that are necessary in the curriculum required by the school district and the state in which they live, and need to reflect on their teaching each day (Landerholm, Gehrie, & Hao, 2003).

Preservice teachers need to be able to reflect on their teaching, reflect on the strategies that they taught, and to reflect on the abilities and individual needs of the students in their classroom (Landerholm et al., 2003). Thinking about how they could have made the lesson better or what the teacher thinks needs to be changed or addressed before teaching the next class or day is crucial for becoming the best teacher one can be. Reflection is a very important aspect of teaching (Castle, 1996; Collier et al., 1998). The teacher needs to reflect on whether it was her teaching style, the content or the curriculum that failed. The teacher needs to reflect on what changes could take place next for better results for the children's learning (Landerholm, et al., 2003). This reflecting helps the teacher make better decisions and helps to increase best practices. Reflection is an important aspect when one is developing teacher efficacy. How the teacher defines her

teaching through reflection can help to increase teacher efficacy. Reflection is an important part in program evaluation, as well. Program evaluation is a necessary to be sure that the curriculum meets the needs of the students (Bainter & Marvin, 2006).

Reflection is also needed for more than just teaching practices. Teachers need to reflect on multiculturalism, special needs, and developmentally appropriate differences. This is extremely necessary for teaching in early childhood classes where there are many children with special needs- both identified and not identified. Along with the special needs population early childhood classes contain children that are gifted. The teacher needs to be able to meet the needs of all of the students by teaching with different strategies that will encompass all learning styles. One such way to do this is to teach using the approach of multiple intelligences created by Gardner (1993). Gardner's philosophy is addressed in this dissertation as an integral aspect to teaching in an early childhood classroom. His work in multiple intelligences are centered on his theory that people learn best when they are allowed to learn in their dominant intelligences. Teachers need to be able to differentiate instruction to adapt to the students' interests and strengths, the students special needs, and to understand what is in the students' best interest in their education. Gardner's multiple intelligence theory is important for teacher preparation in inclusive classrooms due to the ever changing needs of the students and the teachers' ability to adapt to meet their needs.

Another theorist who has had a major impact on the training of early childhood teachers is Vygotsky (1978). Even though Vygotsky's theories were written long ago, his theories are still very prominent in the methodology courses that early childhood

educators must take before student teaching. Vygotsky's theories are an integral part of classroom practice. Vygotsky's theory on learning through social collaboration is an important aspect of classroom teaching in an early childhood classroom. This theory suggests that social interaction leads to continuous step-by-step changes in children's thought and behavior that can vary greatly from culture to culture (Woolfolk, 1998). Vygotsky's theory is that development depends on interaction with people. There are three ways that students learn through social interaction: imitative learning, where one person tries to imitate or copy another; instructive learning, where the student remembers the instructions of the teacher and is able to self-regulate; and collaborative learning, where cultural tools are shared with a group of peers to learn something specific. His theory combines the social environment and cognition. Vygotsky believed that social interaction will lead to continuous changes in a child's thought and behavior. Another of Vygotsky's theories is his theory of zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky's theory of ZPD is also important for teachers to understand, especially in inclusive classrooms. The ZPD is the range that potential students have for learning. ZPD allows a person who is beyond the level of the student (teacher) to expose the student to new information to help them grow. Vygotsky's theories are important to teachers, especially teachers in inclusive classrooms since it is the social environment that plays an important role in the development of children and cognition.

The methodology for this mixed methods dissertation used sequential explanatory theory that will tie qualitative research with quantitative research to create a new field of

research. The new field will enable educators to learn more about teacher efficacy, preparedness, and special education training.

#### Preservice and First Year Teachers:

##### What They Need to Know About Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom

There are many studies as to what preservice and first year teachers need to know. This section will discuss some of the many different aspects necessary for preservice and first year teachers to know to survive and succeed. Teaching in an inclusive classroom proves to be more difficult for some than others. Terminology is often something that preservice and first year teachers can find difficulty distinguishing between the differences in the nuances of the meanings (Snell, Lowman, & Canady, 1996). The terms inclusion and inclusive education are used to describe a merger between general and special education where students with disabilities. Students attend their neighborhood school and learn needed skills alongside the typically developing peers, while receiving all necessary support (Snell, et al., 1996).

There is a difference between inclusion and integrating the students.

Integrating students with disabilities, in contrast to inclusion means that these students spend time with peers, but they may not attend their neighborhood school or be class members with peers. Often integrated students, in contrast to included students, are not full-fledged members of any grade or class and are not regarded as such by general education teachers or by their peers. (Snell, et al., 1996, pp. 265-266)

These definitions can be helpful to the early childhood educator who has not had much experience with classes and students with special needs. Inclusion is when students with disabilities are taught in the classroom with their typically developing peers in their neighborhood schools. Integrating students is when students with special needs come into

the regular classroom for participants such as science, history, and specials- music, gym, art- but still receive their majority of their learning in a resource room with a special education teacher or with an intervention specialist. Students who are integrated may not always attend their neighborhood schools. Many times these students are bussed to a school that houses a larger special education population. Many students are now being taught in inclusive classrooms and the regular classroom teacher is now the one that is doing most of the educating instead of the special education teacher (Van Laarhoven et al., 2007). Due to this fact, it is important for all early childhood teachers to be able to have special education training.

Walbeck, Menlove, Garff, Menlove, and Harris (2003) studied 60 preservice special education teachers, student teachers, and first year teachers regarding their concerns about first year teaching. The findings of the study were found to have three themes: concern over meeting all demands and roles of a special education teacher; conducting an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); and completing the IEP paperwork. It was found that the percentage rate of the preservice teachers was highest in the three categories: 88.2%, 76.5%, and 52.9% respectively. The student teachers had lower percentage rates than that of the preservice teachers: 77.8%, 47.2%, and 44.4% for the three themes. The results of the first year teachers were lower than the preservice teachers but higher than the student teachers with: 83.3%, 50.0%, and 50.0%. A more in-depth analysis was suggested by the authors to explore the results and what they might mean for educators. The break down of the participants of this study was diverse. Of the 60 participants, 6 were first year teachers, 17 were student teachers, and 36 were preservice

teachers. Because all of the groups were uneven, it is difficult to determine the true analysis of this study. It appears that the preservice teachers felt somewhat prepared to teach without having had the opportunity to teach independently. The student teachers showed that they had more confidence than the preservice teachers as they themselves were in the classroom. The teachers were the group that showed the least concern was first year teachers. This study shows that the more experience that the teachers had in the classroom, the worries about completing their job were lessened with their experience.

There are extenuating circumstances that can also be taxing on the new teacher. Time to work effectively with support staff and time to prepare for the students can cause the new teacher stress and become overwhelmed with the amount of work necessary to prepare to teach the diverse needs within the classroom. The study by Smith and Smith (2000) yielded the recommendations that it could be an administrative issue getting the work load and classroom size lowered for more time to meet and collaborate to meet the needs of the special needs students. If the administration does not make accommodations for the teachers to meet the additional demands of meetings, rearrange schedules, and work with additional personnel, teacher feel overburdened, and frustrated. "Teachers who feel pressured by the multiple demands made on their time by the addition of special needs children to their classrooms especially need to encounter the facilitative face of building administration, not just the managerial one" (Smith & Smith, 2000, p. 14). This is the type of instance that can make the teachers burn out quickly. The end of the study described the feelings of the interviewees that "most special needs students children benefit when served in the supportive context of the regular classroom" (p. 14).

Another study about the training needs of preservice teachers was conducted by Romi and Leyser (2006). This European study examined the attitudes of the teachers and their efficacy. The results of the study indicated that the teachers with high efficacy levels also related to their high support for inclusion. Female students were more supportive of inclusion, than males. The two variables, inclusion and efficacy were explored and the results were varied. The researchers found that the wide varieties of scales used world wide are not consistent since they do not contain adequate psychometric characteristics. According to the researchers, Romi and Leyser finding other studies like the one conducted by Romi and Leyser are rare. An instrument for measuring attitudes towards inclusion that has normed, representative samples of educators that can provide satisfactory psychometric qualities for research needs to be developed (Romi & Leyser, 2006). The result of their study indicated that further research needs to be conducted to determine the impact of various teacher education programs “on attitudes, beliefs and skills of preservice teachers that need to include more experience teaching in inclusive and diverse educational settings” (p. 101). These attitudes, beliefs, and skills of preservice teachers are important aspects in the success of classroom teachers.

Preservice teachers need to learn to work collaboratively with others. Having simulated and real experiences working with others in the classroom can prove to be beneficial to preservice early childhood teachers (Lee & Powell, 2005-2006). Interpersonal skills are necessary for the teachers to be effective communicators with parents, and with other teachers. This study asked 36 questions to applicants for teaching that were categorized into five categories. During the interview, the questions fell into the

following categories: “teacher relationships with students, teacher relationships with co-workers, teacher relationships with parents, instructional techniques, and a potpourri of topics and background information” (p. 318). The results of this quantitative analysis demonstrated the importance of having the early childhood preservice teachers use the simulation on the computer that gives them experience with interpersonal relationship skills with co-workers. Interpersonal relationships with co-workers are listed as one of the most frequent conflicts or tensions for preservice teachers and beginning teachers. The more experience the preservice teachers had with the simulation the more success they had with real life experience during their extensive teaching and learning experience. Yoon et al. (2006) also suggests the use of multimedia (video) case studies to be an authentic way to access the community of teachers by watching best practice in action. The success of the simulation was the fact that the situations were realistic. This experience would be worthwhile to many teacher education programs to help the teacher candidates become more familiar to situations that may arise that they otherwise would not know how to handle effectively.

### *Collaboration*

There are differing ways the inclusive classroom works. One such situation is the explanation of how having a specific block of time to plan is a key ingredient to the success of the inclusive classroom. Snell et al. (1996) conducted a study about how Parallel Block Scheduling (PBS) works in large and small schools with inclusive education. The authors found that PBS works well in both small and large schools. One important aspect is that no single classroom would have more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the

students performing at a lower ability group. With PBS, teachers are given a scheduled block of time to collaborate with the Title 1 teacher and the special education teacher to decide what they are planning for the following day. This scheduling gives all teachers time to decide on what aspects are important for the day ahead. This PBS caused a shift in the roles of the teachers. The special education teacher and the Title 1 teachers now become valuable support for the classroom teacher. This shift also changed the way the special education teachers perceived their role, too.

According to Snell et al. (1996) inclusive school practices depend on several key elements:

1. Individualized supports for students with disabilities,
2. Regular and special educators working side by side with heterogeneous groups of students,
3. Teachers sharing their specialties via collaborative teaming, and
4. The recognition of each student's personal preference and individual potential (p. 266).

This school reform accommodates the diverse needs of the students. Each teacher in the room takes a group to work with for periods of time. The teaching does not fall on one individual. Without pull out programs such as the resource room and Title 1 services, the teachers then become collaborative teams instead in individualized teachers. The end result of PBS is instructional adaptations, and cooperative learning groups who can be successful in the inclusive classroom.

Choice time and collaborating are important aspects of teaching in the inclusive classroom with students with diverse needs. First year teachers need to be ready to collaborate with other teachers for the success of their students. This concept is supported in other studies (Bray, 2003; Chang et al., 2005; Snell et al., 1996), which have

demonstrated the importance of planning and collaborating of regular and special education teachers to meet the needs of all learners.

Bray (2003) studied teacher collaboration in an inclusive classroom and gave several suggestions as to how to support diverse learners. Bray conducted a pilot study that looked at the impact of math reform on the students with diverse learning abilities. Finding ways to structure the classroom teaching to enable all students to engage in problem solving and math discussions was what was focused on in the study. Bray identified four pedagogical variables that teachers should provide in differing amounts and in differing intensities: time, structure, support, and complexity. To make this possible, small, flexible grouping is necessary for the students to become engaged in their learning. This collaborative teaching was done by the classroom teacher, the special education teacher, and a half-time general education teacher. Each teacher takes a group and focuses around the goals set for that group. This teacher facilitated, small group time allows the students greater opportunity to actively engage in discussion and gives them support for the concepts being taught. The grouping is a way to keep the special needs students from being grouped in the same manner with other special needs students each time. The groups can change according to the skill level of the students and with the skill level of the specific concept for that day.

After the small group sessions, choice time is offered to the students within the math classroom. Having the ability to choose what activity is interesting to the child helps the child develop control over what they would like to be engaged in. This time allows the teachers to move about the room to provide assistance or enrichment to the

children as needed. Children without exceptionalities also benefit from choice time since it gives the students the opportunity to refine their math skills. When choice time was introduced, the students did not make very good choices. The teachers had to help to steer them in the right directions but as the children became more familiar with choice time, they became more proficient in choosing activities that were more beneficial for their learning. This study shows how the early childhood teacher adapts the curriculum for the diverse needs of the students.

Collaboration was an aspect that was discussed in the study by Chang et al., (2005). By collaborating, the teachers can work with each others' strengths and weaknesses and become better teachers with new skills. Many teachers are not used to collaborating with other teachers since teaching is usually a solitary profession where teachers can interact little during the teaching day since they are in their classrooms with their students. That aspect of teaching is changing with the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). Teachers were required to teach all abilities in the classroom with full inclusion coming to many schools. This will help to put an end to special education segregation (Garguilo et al., 1997).

#### *The Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom*

Early childhood teachers are often the ones who give parents their first experience with inclusion (Smith & Smith, 2000). It is also the early childhood teacher who potentially refers students with special needs. According to the United States Department of Education (1998) the number of children with disabilities served in public schools has increased 51% in the last several decades. Once the student has been officially diagnosed

with special needs, it is the early childhood teacher who is implementing the IEP, meeting the needs of the special needs students, and meeting the needs of the other children in the classroom. Many teachers believe in inclusion and believe that students with special needs benefit from their typically developing peers in the regular education classroom. It is with this statement that it is hard to believe that many teachers are not comfortable and are not successful in the inclusive classroom. As of 1998, less than 23% of the students diagnosed are still served in separate classes from the mainstream educational setting (Cochran, 1998). With 73% of the identified students being served in regular education classrooms or regular classrooms with support services with resource room pull out, regular classroom teachers have in fact become special education teachers without the special education training. Successful integration of special needs students is crucial for the students' success.

Cochran (1998) researched the differences in teacher's attitudes toward inclusive education. He used the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC) to examine the extent that teachers' attitudes toward students with special needs could be measured. The researcher chose 32 schools in five school districts of a southeastern state. There were 18 elementary schools, six middle schools, and five were high schools. In addition to these schools, the researcher chose two schools that were exclusively for students with special needs. Ten of the schools were urban; six were suburban; 11 in communities; and five in rural areas. In all 516 teachers responded to the study. The teachers were broken down into the following categories: 261 elementary teachers, 233 secondary teachers, 186 special education teachers, and 308 regular

education teachers. Twenty-two teachers did not state their teaching assignment. The teachers came from a group where diversity was not widespread: 433 white teachers, 48 black teachers, and 35 teachers of other ethnic backgrounds.

The results of the data showed that special education teachers scored higher on the STATIC and have a more positive attitude about inclusion than the regular education teachers. It also showed that elementary teachers have a more positive attitude toward inclusion than secondary teachers. The higher the score on the STATIC, the higher the correlation between the positive attitudes toward inclusion was. First year teachers, regardless of special education or regular education had a much higher or better attitude of inclusion than more seasoned teachers. The results did not state whether the regular education teachers were elementary or secondary. Since many of the school districts have adopted full inclusion, this study shows the importance of having a positive attitude to aid with success in the inclusive classroom (Cochran, 1998).

In one of the case studies conducted by Kremenitez (2003), a veteran 10 year teacher who was trained as an elementary teacher and taught both 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade was overcome and distraught when she was placed in a kindergarten classroom for the following school year. She found that she was less confident than a first year beginning teacher and was “powerless and unprepared” since she was required to have all of the children on the same performance level.

The outcome of Kremenitez’ study (2003) was that the issues of teacher preparation are significant. It is of the utmost importance for teachers who are not trained in early childhood to not be placed in early childhood environments. What can be done to

ensure that the appropriate teacher is placed in the correct grade for their teacher preparation? Teachers should just not fill empty classrooms if they are not certified and/or trained to teach that specific grade. This can be the case in many school districts where seniority and differing licensures for teaching such as early childhood and elementary education can cause difficulty putting the most qualified teacher in the correct grade (Kremenitez, 2003).

In early childhood teacher education preparation programs, the focus is on developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), a strong working relationship with parents, environment and the individualized learners to maximize the learning. Due to this intense training in theory and DAP teaching for young children, it is the early childhood teachers who should be teaching the primary grades since they are most qualified for working with all different abilities (Kremenitez, 2003). Having the knowledge of typical and atypical behavior is essential in an early childhood classroom (Talay-Ongan, 2001). Early intervention is the key to helping children and their families by providing enriching experiences to help the children grow developmentally according to their own pace. The earlier the intervention begins, the more lasting the effects are (Talay-Ongan, 2001).

As early as 1997 when IDEA was reauthorized, many early childhood educators were calling for professional unification in preparing early childhood educators for inclusive programs (Gargiulo et al., 1997). Educational reform comes and goes depending on the topic. Full inclusion is the belief that all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity or the type of disability, should be educated in the regular classroom in neighborhood schools. Many early childhood educators support this belief.

National legislation such as PL 101-476 which is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that was passed in 1990 and PL 102-119 which is the Amendments to IDEA in 1991 discusses integrating children with disabilities into the mainstream classroom to the extent appropriate with support systems providing intervention in the regular classroom. Providing a unified teaching experience to all early childhood teachers to teach children with special needs is also supported by National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1996). NAEYC stated that early childhood teachers should have the experience of teaching typical as well as atypical students in their teacher education program (NAEYC, 1996).

The NAEYC (1996) has defined six components in personnel preparation for work with both typically developing students as well as atypically developing students: the uniqueness of early childhood's developmental phase; the role and significance in family involvement in early education and intervention; having service delivery in the inclusive setting, instead of a pull out system; having culturally competent professional behavior; and the importance of collaborative interpersonally and interprofessionally. Having a unified early childhood/ early childhood special education teacher training program in place would make for better teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. The preservice teachers would be better able to meet the challenges of the diverse classroom.

In a study conducted in 2003 by McDonnell et al. the achievement of students with developmental disabilities and their peers without disabilities in inclusive settings was completed by using an exploratory study. The quasi-experimental study was

conducted using a pretest/ post test model. The study was conducted using five elementary schools in four different school districts located in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

McDonnell et al. (2003) found that students with developmental disabilities who were primarily served in the general education, inclusive classroom made improvements in their adaptive behavior. The students made gains in not only their educational needs but also their functioning levels. Although this was not included in the study, the researchers found that the students were successful in completing a majority of their IEP goals during that school year. It was stated that the placement of students with developmental disabilities in general education classes did not negatively impact the achievement of their typically developing peers on state mandated criterion-referenced tests in reading/language arts and math.

Cozzuol, Freeze, Lutifiyya, and Van Wallegham (2004) studied the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms, examining the role of the nondisabled peers in promoting social competence with the intellectually disabled students. They were interested in how social interaction among peers worked when disabled peers were introduced into the inclusive classroom. It was the discussion about development of social goals in the IEP that lead the authors to wonder how best to meet the needs of the students. It was a concern about social inclusion and the appropriate development of social competence through peer interaction that lead to this study.

Cozzuol et al. (2004) selected eight teachers through purposive sampling from a pool of 18 candidates for the study. They were selected based on willingness to

participate, recentness of teaching a student with an intellectual disability, and gender and grade level variability. Three male and five female teachers participated. This sample represented all grade levels from grades 1 through 6 with two each from grades 3 and 4.

The participants stated that the atypical students had a desire to fit in and belong. They had wanted a sense of belonging to the classroom's community of learners. Peer role modeling was an important aspect in this study. The study found that all students benefited from inclusion. The typical peers displayed tolerance, compassion, empathy, and responsibility. The atypical peers learned to be accepted and were encouraged to participate in activities since they were now a part of the community of learners. They now belonged. The results of this study showed that having student academically segregated allows for atypical social skills. Academic inclusion facilitates social skills and teaches the atypical students how to belong to the community of learners within the regular classroom. Inclusion is a benefit for all learners both typical and atypical.

Drymond and Russell (2004) conducted a study of the impact of grade and disability on the instructional context of inclusive classrooms. There were 12 students randomly selected from four strata: (mild disabilities, grades 1-2; mild disabilities, grades 3-5; severe disabilities, grades 1-2; and severe disabilities, grades 3-5). All students were selected from the same elementary school. The results of the study found that students with severe disabilities, especially in grades 3-5 spent less time in the general education class than the students in grades 3-5 with mild disabilities, and were more likely to receive support from paraprofessionals instead of special education teachers when they are in the regular classroom. The students with the severe disabilities were seen to have

adaptations made in the curriculum for them as opposed to the students with mild disabilities that did not receive adaptations. It was found that all students with mild disabilities, regardless of grade, received services from a special education teacher while in the regular classroom. The same was true for the students in grades 1-2 with severe disabilities. This is not the case for the students in grades 3-5 with severe disabilities. It was surmised that the reason the students in grades 3-5 with severe disabilities did not receive the same services was due to the fact that they spent little time in the regular classroom with the regular teacher and the paraprofessional. The majority of the students with severe disabilities in grades 3-5 were only in the general education classroom two or fewer hours per day. The students with mild disabilities, regardless of the grade level spent 5-6 hours in the general education classroom. The authors of this study raised the question as to if the staffing for the students with severe disabilities was in the best interest of this population of students since they spent so little time in the regular education classroom. Another question raised by the data was about the reliance of the paraprofessionals with the students with severe disabilities. Some of the teachers expressed concern that the staff with the least amount of training spent time with the students with the most severe disabilities. It was also discussed that if the child that has a paraprofessional assigned to him on a one-to-one basis, the student can become too dependent on the paraprofessional and less likely to develop social interactions with peers and other adults. This study showed the differences among the different grades and severity of the disabilities of the students and how the school districts adapt the curriculum and educational experiences as to who will teach them in the general

education classroom. This poses a question as to whether the students are receiving equity and quality in the general educational setting (Drymond & Russell, 2004).

Smith and Smith (2000) researched regular education early childhood teachers' perceptions of successful inclusion. The qualitative study was to describe the perceptions of regular early childhood education teachers about what hindered or contributed to success in their inclusive classrooms. Six teachers were randomly chosen from a pro-inclusion school district. Three of the teachers were self-described as successful and the other three teachers were self-described as unsuccessful. The teachers participated in a series of four semi-structured interviews about their current experience with inclusion.

The four themes that were found in the study were a need for more adequate and focused training for both regular and special education teachers; better consideration of classroom load factors (including class size, class ratios, and the type and severity of special needs); more reliable support (in-class, collaborative, and administration); and help find more time to meet the increased planning and collaborative demands of inclusive classrooms. The results found that many of the teachers discussed that successful inclusion revolves around administrative issues such as support, class load, class size, and time can only be fixed by the administration. This administrative action is something that is out of the control of the teachers. If the administration is not effective, the teachers bear the burden of the situation by being over worked and not having the necessary support staff in place. Without the support of administration, attrition, and burn out takes place (Smith & Smith, 2000).

Romi and Leyser (2006) explored inclusion preservice training needs and variables associated with attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs. This study was conducted in Israel with 1,155 preservice teachers enrolled in 11 different teacher education colleges. The population consisted of teacher education programs that included: early childhood education, elementary education, special education, middle childhood education, and specialization areas for middle and high school participants such as math, science, history, literature, and other subject specific majors. Of these students, only half of them had reported that they had no experience or very limited experience with students with special needs. It was also reported that 30% of the students reported some experience. A majority of the students 709/1155 had no coursework or limited training in special education.

Romi and Leyser (2006) found that teachers had strong support for the principle of inclusion but also had support for segregated special education placements. The sense of efficacy for personal efficacy, social efficacy, and efficacy regarding low-achieving students were higher than those for teaching efficacy. There was less support for inclusion in Arab (Muslim) colleges compared to students from Jewish colleges. The two groups also had differences among the self-efficacy scores. The area of study and experience was associated with level of support for inclusion and self-efficacy scores. The way the program was set up and the progression of their training was associated with increased concerns and less support for inclusion. It was also found that female students supported inclusion than males, and had higher self-efficacy scores.

Implications of this study show that the researchers (Romi & Leyser, 2006) have found that since many universities and colleges in many countries have started to add special education content into their teacher education training courses for general education majors that the evidence of this study suggests that one course is not effective. The authors also state the same findings were found in Staton and McCollum's (2002) study, as well. Staton and McCollum researched unifying general and special education and what the research indicates. Teacher educators need more extensive preparation to work with special needs students in inclusive classrooms. Teacher educators need more extensive infusion of special education content in the curriculum and more intensive and varied field experiences in settings with children both with and without disabilities (Romi & Leyser, 2006; Staton & McCollum, 2002). It was also stated that changes in special education programs should be adjusted as well to be sure that the teacher preparation is effective for when the students work in the field.

These studies together indicate a need for more special education preparation for regular education teachers, but none of the studies went into a description of the kind of preparation that was needed, other than to say one course was not adequate. This study explores the levels of teacher preparation that help increase teacher efficacy for first year teachers.

### *Special Education Training*

There is little literature and research about exactly how much special education training is necessary for an early childhood educator to have to be successful within the inclusive classroom. Something must be done to meet the challenges of NCLB and

IDEA. There is a call for standardization for states' standards in teacher education to be created for the early childhood educators who focus on teaching children birth through age 8 (Gargiulo et al., 1997). Teachers for the

workplace of the twenty-first century must be prepared to meet the needs of all learners. Thus, we issue a call for a collaborative or integrative personnel preparation program. We are not the originators of this idea. Support for this model of teacher preparation is growing in both early childhood circles and the field of early childhood special education (Burton et al., 1992; DEC Task Force on Recommended Practices, 1993; Miller, 1992; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1996)

Although state standards are now in place for most of the states as to what is required to teach the children per grade level, it would benefit all early childhood educators for some kind of national standard for teacher training to be sure that all are qualified to keep up with the ever changing world. This extra stressor can affect the teacher's efficacy and can cause distracters from teaching for the teacher (Gargiulo et al., 1997).

It is also thought that

The time is right to question whether or not we can continue to legitimately train early childhood professionals via distinct preparation programs. Miller (1992) is of the opinion that...the practice of educating teachers to work with either "regular" or "nonregular" preschoolers can no longer be supported. Fractionation in teacher education programs is contradictory to all legal, philosophical, empirical, economic, and moral reasoning for early childhood education. Such segregation practices in teacher training perpetuate the myth that particular types of children need teachers who have trained in discrete bodies of knowledge and pedagogy assessable only to members of specialized fields of expertise. (Gargiulo et al., 1997, p. 39)

Having a differing curriculum that is specifically designed to teach preservice teachers how to work in inclusive classrooms is especially helpful. Van Laarhoven et al. (2007) conducted Project ACCEPT (Achieving Creative & Collaborative Educational Preservice Teams), an initiative conducted at Northern Illinois University. Both special

education and general education students participated in a voluntary enhanced curriculum and field experiences in inclusive classrooms to better prepare the preservice teachers once they graduate. The study resulted in better preparation for the volunteers of the program compared to the students who took traditional courses. Having the hands-on experiences was beneficial to the preservice teachers and the project was deemed to be successful.

Another study supports the fact that early childhood teachers often have little to no training in educating children with disabilities (Chang et al., 2005). In a study conducted in 1999, 438 institutions of higher learning with early childhood teachers' preparation programs were surveyed from Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. The amount of four year institutions were 47%, and 76% of the Universities were public institutions. The data that were analyzed determined the following:

1. If early childhood teacher education programs include a part of their mission preparing students to work in early childhood special education;
2. The number and type of courses available related to children with disabilities, working with families, collaboration with professionals in other disciplines, and home visiting;
3. The amount of field experience related to working with children with disabilities; and
4. If the level of the degree offered related to the coursework available.  
(Chang et al., p. 2)

It was discovered that even though special education training was a part of the mission of the college, many colleges fell short. Of the early childhood preparation programs surveyed, only 60% include training early childhood educators in special education as part of their mission. It was discovered that only 40% of bachelor's programs required a

course in educating and working with special needs children (Chang et al., 2005). Field experiences in classrooms with children with disabilities fared a bit better since some classrooms contained children with special needs.

The findings of the study by Chang et al., (2005) show that improvement is needed in regulating the standards in early childhood education preparation programs, especially as the movement to full inclusion continues in the school systems. For the classroom teachers with little to no training in special education, inservice and professional development is necessary for the teachers to adapt to what is occurring in the classrooms.

#### Role of the University in Teacher Preparation

The passage of PL 94-142 (1975) made it possible for children with disabilities to be taught in their least restrictive environment and the passage of IDEA (1997) made it possible for students with disabilities to be educated in a general education class.

Inclusion of a diverse population of students with many differing levels of need within a regular classroom must be met by the teacher. A problem can arise when the teacher does not feel qualified for teaching children with special needs. Many universities have a course or two for early childhood preservice teachers about special education but because so many of the students entering the regular classrooms have specific needs, the regular classroom teachers feel unprepared for the challenges that having inclusion can bring (Gargiulo et al., 1997).

This brings up the issue whether or not universities have given the preservice teachers enough information and education about special education for them to be fully

prepared for teaching within the inclusive classroom. At one time, children who were mainstreamed into the regular classroom had an aide or a special education teacher who worked collaboratively with the regular classroom teacher, but inclusion is making this scenario a thing of the past. Children need to be able to learn in the least restrictive environment and that often means the classroom. Classroom teachers need to be fully prepared to meet the needs of the diverse learners in their classroom and the universities need to be more aware of how their training in special education can effect the performance of the early childhood teacher. If so many early childhood teachers are in need of better training, how will they be successful in the classroom with students with diverse needs?

Teachers need to know how to make adaptations for their students. The PRAXIS III lesson plan format helps to show the preservice teachers what is necessary to do in the lesson that they teach by having adaptations as a section in the format of the lesson plan itself. Universities have adapted the PRAXIS III so that the students can go on to pass the different PRAXIS exams necessary for the preservice teacher to obtain licensure in teaching. The preservice teacher needs to be aware that once they graduate, they need to continue to make adaptations for the students. Adaptations need not only be made for the students on IEPs, they need to be made for all children who need them for that specific lesson. Each lesson is different. Some children will be successful in measurement while others are not. The next day, the children that adaptations were made for may not need them. It is an important skill for the preservice teacher to acquire (Jacobs, 2001).

It is the college supervisor that brings support to the student teacher. The supervisor is the one who supports and guides the student teacher through the student teaching experience. The supervisor provides suggestions and gives emotional support to the student teacher (Clifford et al., 2005). The supervisor provides constructive feedback to the student teacher.

Giving the student teachers an education that is laden in theory is not enough. The preservice teachers need to have collaborative experiences in quality settings that allow them to have a full understanding of what is truly expected of them as teachers (Hooks & Randolph, 2003). It is up to the university to be sure that the student teacher is ready for the real world as well. There are many instances where the student teacher has had a model cooperating teacher and a model education only to go out on her own after graduating to find that teaching is nothing at all like the experience that she had student teaching (Walbeck et al., 2003). In this study, it was determined by Walbeck et al. that approximately 50% of all new Utah special education teachers left the field during the first year of teaching. It was also found that there was an increase to 60% the second year and it leveled out by the end of the third year. One of the findings was that the student teachers were sheltered from the paperwork and the bureaucracy involved in teaching in a school system. It is up to the university to see that they are correctly prepared. This would certainly help the first year teachers have a better understanding of what exactly was required of them. Student teachers and teachers in their first year of teaching were questioned about what would have helped them to be better prepared for the classroom.

The survey results from Walbeck et al. (2003) resulted in three top concerns. The first topic was effectively meeting all demands and roles of a special education teacher. The preservice teachers had a confidence level of 88.2%; the student teachers had a level of 77.8%; and first year teachers had an 83.3% confidence level. The second topic of concern was conducting an IEP. Preservice teachers had a confidence level of 76.5%; student teachers had 47.2%; and first year teachers had a confidence level of 50%. The last concern was knowing how to complete IEP paperwork. The preservice teacher had a confidence level of 52.9%; student teachers had 44.4%; and first year teachers had other concerns such as testing, getting caught up, and juggling it all. They had a confidence level of 50%. A more in depth analysis of this survey and the data was the suggestion of the authors. This would also help to decrease the stress level of the job and determine what else needs improving so that first year teachers feel confident in their first classroom. More confidence could lead to less attrition from teaching.

Having good early childhood teachers comes from good early childhood higher education. By having well prepared trained teachers, the schools are ensured of having better quality teachers in the classrooms. According to Kremenitez and Miller (2003) quality teachers coming from quality teacher preparation programs support the following goals:

1. Our number one national educational goal, that all children will begin school ready to learn;
2. Our understanding of what that means has been expanded by the recent early literacy research base;
3. Our President's wish to leave no child behind; and
4. Technology and the information age have increased the level expected abilities and skills of the future work force. A paradigm shift in social policy

needs to occur to keep up with the paradigm shift that has now occurred with the new view of the importance of early childhood education. (p. 11)

The findings of the study by Chang et al. (2005) show that improvement is needed in regulating the standards in early childhood education preparation program, especially as the movement to full inclusion continues in the school systems. For the classroom teachers with little to no training in special education, inservice and professional development is necessary for the teachers to adapt to what is occurring in the classrooms.

Teacher preparation is such an important aspect of high quality teachers and high quality education programs (Chang et al., 2005). The authors of this study have recommended that teacher preparation programs need to reexamine “whether or not they are providing the foundations for their graduates to work with children with disabilities” (Chang et al., 2005, p. 2).

An innovative teacher preparation program that teaches preservice teachers how to teach in an inclusive childhood setting was begun in 1993 in the College of Education at the University of Tennessee (Collier et al., 1998). The reform was created because the faculty believed that the preservice teachers should be taught in a manner that coincided with what was being taught in the college classroom as to how to teach children with differing abilities. The program proved to be not only unique but very effective. The preservice teachers leave the university fully prepared to teach in the inclusive classroom.

Preservice teachers also need to have many different kinds of skills in order to be successful in the classroom, and in the school setting. Interpersonal skills are essential in working with other faculty, staff, parents and administration (Lee & Powell, 2005- 2006). Lee and Powell found preservice teachers were able to polish these interpersonal skills

though simulated and real experience. The preservice teachers had computer based simulation to enhance their interpersonal skills before they did work in the classroom. Once they had an understanding of different situations, they were able to use their knowledge with real experiences.

Having communicative competence is very important (Pink, 2004). In many instances, preservice teachers are ill equipped to teach in the urban setting since they do not have the opportunity to have had teaching experience in the urban schools. In a perfect world, preservice teachers could have teaching experiences in urban, suburban, and rural school settings before graduating. It is possible for some schools to have the students experience this, but for many others, it is not at all a possibility. Pink suggests when this cannot work; preservice teachers need to be made aware of the differences of the three types of educational settings and should be taught about how to teach in each of these settings. Suburban living and urban living differ greatly and the preservice teacher often has trouble understanding the difference in the culture. It is also often the case that the preservice teacher is from a middle class, suburban background and is predominately white. Pink suggests that the preservice teacher spend volunteer time in the urban schools before graduation and that they try to experience as much diversity by volunteering in diverse setting as possible.

Another aspect of teacher preparation that should be addressed is the lack of training on diversity issues (Marbley et al., 2007; Pink, 2004). According to a report from the Office of Research and Improvement (2000) in Washington, DC, teacher preparation institutions struggle with diversity issues. Many programs prepare teachers to work with

increasing diverse (ethnically and racially) populations of young children since lack of ethnic/racial diversity is more problematic as compared to the large majority of teachers who do not feel comfortable or “well prepared to teach students with limited English proficiency, from cultural backgrounds different from their own, or with disabilities” (p. 3). It was also stated that “considering the multicultural differences and global interdependence, the difference of people, thoughts, abilities, and values should be more accepted and tolerated” (Lee & Powell, 2005-2006, p. 318).

Preservice teachers need to have the “multicultural training and experiences that challenge, stretch, and expand preservice teachers’ worldviews, axiologies and epistemology” (Marbley, 2007, p. 8) so that they are not scared away from teaching in lower economical areas or in the urban settings. Another point that the authors make is that not only is it important to educate our children for the future welfare and national security of our country but it is also important to prepare the teachers for working with racially and culturally diverse learners (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Preservice teachers need to be able to identify with their own culture and then they will be able to identify with other cultures different from their own. Having vast knowledge of diversity is essential in teacher preparation programs for the preservice teachers to be successful in the classroom upon graduating and before (Marbley et al., 2007). According to the Census Bureau, in 2050 it is “projected that the total school aged population would reach 58% non-white” (Orfield & Yun, 1999, p. 7). With so many students of color, it is necessary for the preservice teachers to have knowledge of the

differences between the cultures. Having culturally specific pedagogy and diversity sensitive training would be important components in teacher education programs.

Teacher preparation programs must pay attention to the recent and accelerated changes in the nation's demographics in terms of cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as the diversity of family structures, in order to adapt and attend to the needs of today's society. (AACTE, 2004, p. 7)

In 1999, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCATE) developed five initiatives for changes to be made for quality improvement in teacher education (McCarthy, Cruz, & Ratcliff, 1999). The five initiatives have implications for the preparation of teachers of young children. The initiatives are "1). Integrating content and pedagogy, 2). Performance assessment, 3). Upgrading field experiences, 4). Promoting diversity, and 5). Integrating technology in teacher preparation" (McCarthy et al., 1999, p. 12). These initiatives can be found throughout this study as being important aspects of the teacher education that lead to successful preservice teachers.

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) had a focus council on early childhood education in 2004 and wrote a report called the Early Childhood Challenge: Preparing High-Quality teachers for a Changing Society that outlined changing needs and new challenges for society, institutions, the Early Childhood Education (ECE) profession, and professionals working with young children. There were recommendations for policy development and for the private sector.

The changing needs and challenges of society due to higher divorce rates, working mothers, and dual-income families have caused an increase in the need of more early childhood care and education programs. It is also recommended that preservice teachers be educated on external and internal issues of the classroom. External issues are

issues that are family structures, parent involvement, and demographic and cultural changes. Internal issues are participants such as best teaching practices and theory (AACTE, 2004).

With the changing demographics and the increase of children from differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the classrooms, especially children who are English language Learners (ELL) early childhood teachers should be more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse to better reflect the make up of the students in the classrooms. Increase the diversity knowledge of white teachers to be able to work with racially, ethnically, and linguistic diverse students (AACTE, 2004).

The recommendations for changing needs and challenges for institutions show a need to create linkages between the 2 and 4 year colleges by establishing collaborations between higher education institutions to develop consistent quality standards in ECE preparation programs. It was also stated that it would be beneficial to establish articulation across degrees (associate/bachelor/master/doctor) by defining knowledge and skill level for each degree (AACTE, 2004).

There is a need for the changing needs and challenges for professionals working with young children. There is a definite need for developing a teacher preparation curriculum that reflects recent societal changes as well as the new knowledge and advances in ECE. There is a need to have ease of transfer and degrees such as associates degree and child development administration (CDA) establishing a continuum of ECE teacher preparation and credentialing facilities that license minority teachers. It was also suggested to provide alternative training/credentialing options for ECE teachers. Studying

the reasons for high ECE teacher turnover needs to be done since ECE programs have the highest turnover rates in education with over 40% turnover. Providing professional support for ECE teachers and fostering peer support/mentoring programs to deal with the ever changing school, family, and community changes is an important change that should take place to help the teachers with a lack of teaching credentials since large numbers of seasoned ECE teachers lack teaching degrees (AACTE, 2004). These are just some of the recommendations given by AACTE to help the early childhood field and to improve teacher education at the higher education level.

Hooks and Randolph (1994) completed research about excellence in teacher preparation; partners in success and found that universities need to work cooperatively and in partnership with faculty from the university and schools, and preservice teachers to make positive changes in teacher preparation in teacher education programs. Results from the study came with seven recommendations to best meet the needs of preservice teachers:

1. Preservice teachers need to be in good programs. It was worth the extra work to have your students placed in high-quality settings. The overwhelming importance of the quality of the setting and the professional relationships outweigh the costs of having to travel an extra distance.
2. All voices must be heard-those of teachers, students, children, parents, administrators, and faculty.
3. Professional development relationships take time and require continuity. Programs must be constantly be assessed, and that assess should be used to improve the quality of the programs for all involved.
4. Collaboration must be consistent.
5. Experiences with a diverse population lead to greater knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of diversity and all that it entails within a school setting.
6. All involved in the partnership must be committed to the quality of the overall program and all of the program components. Today's caring professionals

must nurture and guide our future “caring and effective” professionals.  
(Hooks & Randolph, 2004, p. 236)

The idea of working closely together is an important part of teacher education preparation. In this case, all of the partners are aware of what the other is doing. In doing this, the teacher education program is strengthened, and the students benefit from being ready for the preservice teaching experiences as they learn how to hone their abilities to teach in the classroom.

#### Appropriate Teaching Practices/Best Practices

Once the student teacher and/or first year teacher is in the classroom it will then be her job to begin building scaffolds with the children to obtain information to become successful learners (Jacobs, 2001; Winsler, 2003). The teacher will be able to draw upon her vast knowledge learned at the university and through field work to teach the children using a multitude of strategies that will help each learner learn at the best of their ability.

Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory (1993) has helped to make these strategies more effective in the classroom. With the teachers having an understanding that all students learn in a different manner, the teachers are able to make better use of the learning strategies so that each child is reached. It is important to teach in different modalities such as auditory, visual and kinesthetic ways to help the learners make connections to their prior knowledge and learn in a manner that best meets their needs. Teacher will use a variety of strategies when teaching. Having an intimate knowledge of many different types of strategies is extremely important to be an effective teacher.

Authentic assessment is the best way to see the progress of each child (Jacobs, 2001). Authentic assessment is when the teacher uses observation, checklists, and not

standardized tests to evaluate the students' learning. This is a much better way to determine what the child's strengths and weaknesses are. Preservice teachers need to know how to assess their students in this manner for their own benefit when writing and teaching lessons. In a public school system, teachers are required by law to give standardized tests. The standardized tests results weigh heavily on school funding. Even though information can be gained from standardized tests, it is the student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a child who is struggling that will not benefit from this type of assessment. This is what No Child Left Behind is all about. It then becomes the teacher and the school's responsibility to be sure that these children do not fall through the cracks. This strengthens the reasoning behind why teachers need to be able to assess their own students using quick and accurate assessments so that they are able to meet all of their needs. Collier et al. (1998) also believed that authentic assessment is beneficial since you are observing children in their natural setting.

Best practices can be achieved when the teacher uses reflective thinking and is able to make connections with what was learned in the university classroom and field work to create an environment that is rich with learning and discovery (Grossman & Williston, 2002). Modeling different strategies for the children is another excellent example of best practices. Each child learns at his own pace, and has his own interests. It is the teacher who needs to teach a variety of strategies to be able to help the student find the one that works best for him. It is by doing this that the teacher achieves best practices that are sound and that are developmentally appropriate.

In order for beginning teachers to exhibit best practice, several factors have been put into place by having the teachers become highly qualified (as a result of NCLB) and having them pass the PRAXIS I, II, and III (Blanton et al., 2003). The PRAXIS I has to do with reading and math, the PRAXIS II is subject matter and teaching principles, and the PRAXIS III was developed to assess the teaching skills of beginning teachers. The PRAXIS III has 19 different criteria that are broken down into four categories:

1. Organizing content knowledge for student learning
2. Creating an environment for student learning
3. Teacher for student learning
4. Teacher professionalism

In the PRAXIS III, beginning teachers are assessed in the field in three different ways by an assessor:

1. Direct observation of classroom practice
2. Written materials (such as a lesson plan)
3. Interviews before and after the observation related to the lesson

Assessment takes place in the teachers' classrooms. The teachers are allowed to explain the actions in the classroom, and the scoring of the lesson allows for the fact that good teaching can take many different forms. Skilled, trained, experienced educators are the assessors for the beginning teachers (Blanton et al., 2003).

#### Early Childhood Education Teacher Efficacy During the First Years of Teaching

Woolfolk-Hoy has done quite extensive research on teacher efficacy (1990, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2004). This research conducted by Woolfolk-Hoy and in several instances other authors, sparked the interest for this dissertation. Teacher efficacy was studied in relation to the prospective teachers' sense of control (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990); changes in teacher efficacy during the early years of teaching (2000); teacher efficacy:

capturing an elusive construct (2001); and respect, social support, and teacher efficacy: a case study (2002) are some of the efficacy studies to be discussed in this section.

According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) “teacher efficacy has proved to be powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes such as teachers’ persistence, enthusiasm, commitment and instructional behavior, as well as student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy beliefs” (p. 783). They believe that proposing a new measurement instrument for teacher efficacy will be beneficial for providing validity and reliability from three different studies. This is also the instrument being used in this study, but a later version of the scale is implemented for the study in this dissertation. It is called the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES). The main outcome of the study done by Woolfolk and Hoy (2000) was that it is most important to define what efficacy is and how it is defined in each study. In their study, Woolfolk and Hoy (2000) defined teacher efficacy as the interactive effects of general teaching and personal efficacy for custodial pupil control ideology, controlling motivational orientation, and bureaucratic orientation.

*Teacher Efficacy: Capturing an Elusive Construct* by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) was the study where the data was collected and analyzed to determine a new measurement instrument. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy describe teacher efficacy belief as “a judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (p. 783). Teaching efficacy is an important aspect of teaching that was further investigated about what teachers need to know about self-efficacy.

Hoy (2004) presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) about what teachers need to know about self-efficacy. The difference between self-concept and self-esteem was addressed. According to Hoy, self-efficacy is “a context-specific assessment of competence to perform a specific task” (p. 3) and the beliefs are about the future. “Self-esteem is concerned with judgment of self-worth” and “self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of personal capabilities” (Hoy, 2004, p.3). “Self-efficacy is a concept to categorize with and is part of a larger theory to think with. It is a context-specific assessment of competence to perform a specific task” (Woolfolk-Hoy, 2004, p. 3). Self-concept is when one compares oneself to others. Self-esteem is how one feels about oneself. Self-efficacy focuses on one’s ability to accomplish a particular task that is not compared to another.

Hoy’s speech (2004) also discussed motivational principles that teachers should implement in their classrooms to influence student’s self-efficacy such as support and recognize mastery experiences. It also gave information about teachers becoming more self-regulated in their lives both personal and professional. This would be a wonderful way for schools to help the teachers with professional development as they continue to grow academically, professionally, and personally as teachers.

The most important source of efficacy is mastery. It is the authentic accomplishments of the learning from the past. In 2000, Woolfolk-Hoy presented the Changes in Teacher Efficacy during the Early Years of Teaching to the annual meeting of AERA in New Orleans. Hoy (2000) discussed the importance of teacher efficacy and how it should continue to grow as the teacher gains more knowledge and experience.

Teacher efficacy changes as the teacher grows with classroom experience (Hoy, 2000). “Some of the most powerful influences on the development of teacher efficacy are mastery experiences during student teaching and the induction year” (Hoy, 2000. p. 2). Hoy and Woolfolk (1990) discovered in previous research that some aspects of efficacy increase during student teaching while others decline with mastery.

The efficacy beliefs of preservice and student teachers are linked to children and control. Preservice teachers’ change their efficacy based on personal traits and guided practices (Yeh, 2006). Novice teachers have their efficacy based on stress and commitment to teaching. Each year, the teacher changes the efficacy as it evolves along with the teacher and his experience with the school, students, parents, and bureaucracy of the school system. The findings of this study showed that efficacy, when assessed during teacher preparations, were higher than when assessed during actual experience teaching. Undergraduates that have a low self-efficacy were more likely to have strict discipline, took a pessimistic view of students’ motivation, used extrinsic rewards, and punishments to make the study follow the classroom regulations and rules (Hoy, 2000). The teachers with high self-efficacy were rated more positively in the classroom than the other group. These teachers had good classroom management control, lesson writing and presenting, and had good questioning techniques than their counterparts (Hoy, 2000). Efficacy of preservice teachers is higher than the efficacy of student teachers (Hoy, 2000). It is believed that the realities and complexities of teaching throughout the student teachers’ experience may lower their optimism once faced with the duties of the classroom teacher (Hoy, 2000).

The efficacy of novice teachers has “few studies have looked at the development of efficacy beliefs . . . it seems that efficacy beliefs of first year teachers are related to stress and commitment to teaching, as well as satisfaction with support and satisfaction” (Hoy, 2000, p. 6). The novice teachers who had high efficacy found that their teaching experience had greater satisfaction, had a positive reaction to teaching, and had less stress (Hoy, 2000). It was also found that the teachers with high levels of self-efficacy indicated that they had optimism to remain in the teaching field.

Teachers’ sense of efficacy and beliefs about control was a study conducted by Woolfolk and Hoy in 1990. A sample of 182 prospective teachers was involved in a study about personal efficacy and teaching efficacy that related to beliefs about control and motivation. The participants were liberal art majors with 155 of them women and 27 men. These students were enrolled in teacher education in a university on the East coast. The participants involved were 104 elementary education majors, and 78 secondary education majors.

The results of the study conducted by Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) found that preservice teachers had inconsistent beliefs. It was believed that the sample could have been the reason for these results as the sample consisted of prospective teachers with no actual classroom experience. The study was then completed with experienced Hebrew school teachers that did not yield the same results as the first study. These results found that new teachers with direct contact with students and the school administration forces the new teachers to be more realistic and more grounded in their view but it also found that they often were less humanistic.

In a study conducted by Yeh (2006), it was concluded that the teacher traits observed in the study interact with guided practices and lead to change by reflective thinking and through mastery experiences. Yeh (2006) conducted an interactive study about the effects of personal traits and guided practices on preservice teachers' changes in personal teaching efficacy. Solving problems and critical thinking are important aspects in teaching. Yeh (2006) found that by using a simulation program, preservice teachers were able to have positive interaction with the use of the computer program to lead to changes in personal teaching efficacy with reflective teaching and mastery experiences. More information about this study can be found in this chapter.

Bandura (1977, 1997) examined four sources of efficacy expectations: mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. If one feels that the experience is positive, then the efficacy level rises; if it is viewed as negative, the efficacy lowers. Vicarious experiences are where the skill is modeled by someone else that the observer identifies with and when it is perceived to be well done, then the viewer's efficacy grows. The opposite is true when the perception is viewed as poor. Social persuasion is considered to be talk in the teacher's lounge, or talk in the media about teachers. Persuasion can influence the teacher's success by initiating new tasks or even attempt new strategies. Persuasion can also instill self-doubt in the teacher. The teacher that is strong willed will be more successful overcoming what varying levels of persistence can destroy.

Self-efficacy can also increase through mentoring (Saffold, 2005). At times, social interaction can aid or encourage a new teacher. The use of a mentor gives the

novice teacher more courage and confidence. If the new teacher has stress and anxiety, that can lead to poor self-efficacy. So, it can be stated that a person's mood is an aspect of evaluating part of their efficacy. This can also go both ways. Novice teachers can feel overwhelmed and that leads to lower efficacy while the mentor can gain efficacy by feeling good for helping another teacher out thus giving themselves significance in their life (Saffold, 2005). This mentoring situation brings a positive change for both the novice teachers as well as the veteran teachers. It is a positive experience for both.

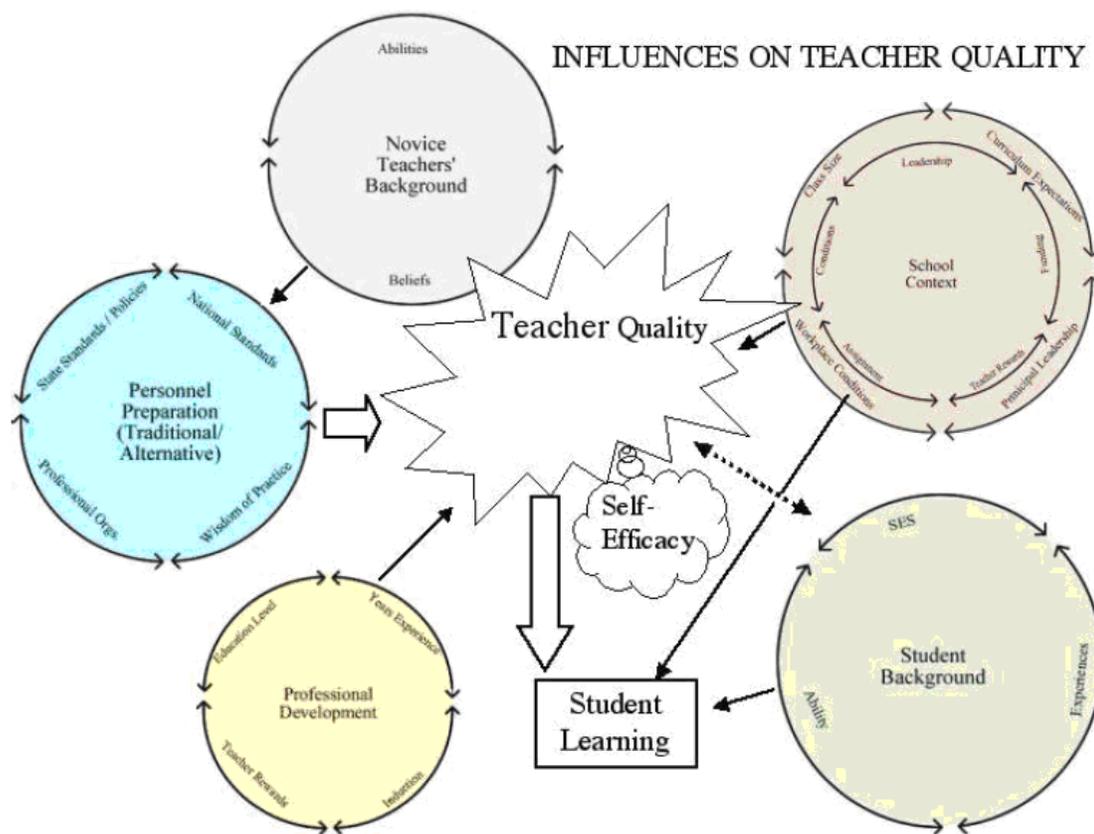
Unfortunately, not all novice teachers have mentors and thus can lead to anxious feeling for the new teachers. More research has been conducted as to what other aspects can lead to positive self-efficacy.

Woolfolk-Hoy and Milner conducted further research about self-efficacy in 2002 about *Respect, Social Support, and Teacher Efficacy: A Case Study*. This case study was presented to the AERA in 2002. This qualitative study was done about an African American teacher (one of the three on staff) teaching in a suburban school and the role that her efficacy played with her challenges of teaching in an unsupported environment. The teacher discussed her experience and several themes became evident. The teacher had an experience of social and collegial isolation; she felt as though she had the burden of invalidating stereotypes among her colleagues and students; the importance of students' and parents' the importance of students' and parents' perceptions and respect; and the role of self-reflective experiences. More information about cultural beliefs and factors involved in a teacher's environment and its role in teacher efficacy a subject that merited further research was suggested in the recommendation section of this case study.

Measurement instruments that reflect this context should be reexamined to truly measure useful and legitimate views of teacher self-efficacy.

Influences on teacher quality are reflected in the figure below (see Figure 2).

Efficacy plays an important factor in the thoughts of teacher quality of each individual teacher.



*Figure 2.* Influences on Teacher Quality

From Center of Personnel Studies in Special Education. Retrieved on January 20, 2007, from <http://www.copsse.org>.

Further research conducted by Yoon et al. (2006) about teacher efficacy centers on elementary preservice teachers. The study was conducted by using a precise and post-case questionnaire about self-confidence and low self-efficacy. The preservice teachers had levels of inadequacy in their specific field of science education which leads to their low self-confidence and low self-efficacy. The study found that if this issue was not addressed, the level of self-efficacy would not change during their inservice teaching careers. The content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge went hand in hand and play an important role in high levels of self-efficacy.

The research showed that the preservice teachers were “striving to make links between previously acquired theoretical and personal experience” (Yoon et al., 2006, p. 32). The study showed the importance of scaffolding with the case method with differing levels of science expertise to contribute to the surrounding case method. Multimedia was shown to be beneficial for the preservice teachers since it highlighted best practices.

According to Wagler and Mosely (2005) teacher efficacy has been shown to be positively related to student achievement. In a study of preservice elementary teachers it was found that preservice teachers with high self-efficacy were less anxious about using inquiry based teaching and learning and therefore were successful in teaching the children.

Overall teacher efficacy, teacher efficacy in classroom management, teacher efficacy in instructional strategies, and teacher efficacy in student engagement was researched in the study with secondary preservice students conducted by Wagler and Mosely (2005). The study was conducted using a pretest, post test 1, and post test 2

design. The overall teacher efficacy from the beginning of the study with the secondary methods course to the end of the study with student teaching showed that no significant change was detected. The results showed no increase or decrease in overall efficacy from test 1 to test 3.

The classroom management teacher efficacy from the three tests remained unchanged. It was found that classroom management was not a major component in secondary education courses. A three week seminar was introduced for the classroom management segment of the methods courses (Wagler & Mosely, 2005).

Instructional strategies teacher efficacy also had no significant change. It was surmised that that this may be due to the lack of opportunities to engage actual students during the secondary methods course (Wagler & Mosely, 2005). The researchers believed that “the preservice teachers were unaware of the relationship between student engagement and classroom management and viewed these two entities as separate issues” (p. 453).

Even though the purpose of the study conducted by Wagler and Mosely (2005) was to be about teacher efficacy in secondary preservice teachers, several interesting observations came to light that were not expected. The disconnect between student engagement and classroom management was the biggest issue. Further research with in-depth interviews would be helpful to probe to find why this is happening.

Teacher efficacy is a subject that is important to all teacher educators, regardless of what grade level is taught. Teacher efficacy is developed as a preservice teacher and

continues developing throughout the teachers' lifetime of teaching. Theories in teacher education and experiences help to build efficacy be it high, medium or low.

### Influence of Vygotsky in Early Childhood Education

Vygotsky was a futurist. His theories are just as relevant if not more than when they were written over 70 years ago (Winsler, 2003). His theories have teachers thinking not only about the child, but the also the prior experiences that child had before reaching the teacher in the classroom. The child's cultural background is an important aspect of his prior experience. His theories have made significant contribution to early childhood education.

Vygotsky's theories brought about changes by upgrading Piaget's theories to improve and increase the way children's development is viewed (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivists believe in a hands-on theory of development that promotes using a curricula customized to the student's prior knowledge. Even though Vygotsky approached development differently from Piaget, he still had many similarities to Piaget's theories based on social knowledge, especially his work with Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, Cole et al., 1978). Vygotsky believed that development begins at birth and ends in death (Vygotsky, van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). Vygotsky constructed the social development theory of learning when he discovered that within a group of children who were at the same developmental level, there were children that were not able to learn as quickly as the other children who only needed little assistance. This social learning theory was the keystone of his work.

Scaffolding and reciprocal teaching are effective strategies to access the ZPD. The ZPD is the distance between the most difficult task that a child can do alone and the most difficult task a child can do with help (Vygotsky, Cole et al., 1978). Vygotsky called the theory of assistance by a peer or teacher scaffolding (Vygotsky, van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). Scaffolding works by starting with a base of knowledge and building upon it layer by layer. The idea behind scaffolding is to provide direct instruction to provide a framework of learning and then be able to transition from the scaffold to independent instruction.

#### Building Scaffolds in the Classroom and in the Field

Scaffolds must be built from the ground up (Winsler, 2003; Jacobs, 2001; Samaras & Gismondi, 1998). Vygotsky's scaffold theory is using the child's prior experiences and uses the information as a base of the scaffold. As the child learns, more layers of the framework are built upon the existing layer of knowledge. The new knowledge is built upon the old knowledge until the new knowledge is understood and then the framework continues. This continues until the child is able to take the information and use it independently. The goal of scaffolding is to have the child become an independent thinker based on the information gained from the scaffold (Vygotsky, 1978).

It is the role of the professor to build the knowledge about the theories as the framework for the preservice teacher (Winsler, 2003). The preservice teacher needs to understand the theories, both the hows and whys of the theorist's thoughts. By doing this,

the preservice teacher had a deep understanding to how and when to use the different theories and strategies to make the learning environment most effective (Winsler, 2003).

Once the preservice teachers have an understanding of the theories and theorists for teaching and the strategies to use in the classroom, the next section of the scaffolding is field work. Out in the field, preservice teachers are able to put the strategies and theories to practice (Jacobs, 2001). They learn about developmentally appropriate practice in a hands-on way while teaching under the guidance of cooperating teachers.

The cooperating teacher is an important aspect of the preservice teachers' experience. The cooperating teacher provides the practicum experiences for the preservice teacher and provides the assessment for the preservice teacher's ZPD (Samaras & Gismondi, 1998). It is through the practicum experiences and field work that help the preservice teacher gain the background and knowledge to build their scaffold until the student is ready to go out without the aid of their peers and professor to become the student teacher. The student teacher is not completely independent yet, they need to have the guidance of the cooperating teacher who guides them with her expertise and experience, and the college supervisor who also guides with experience and helps to bring the theories to life with the student teacher.

### Methodology

This study consists of mixed methods using the sequential explanatory strategy. The use of qualitative and quantitative methodology was combined to achieve the overall quality of the research. Mixed methods refer to all procedures collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in the context of a single study (Tashakkori &

Teddlie, 2003). Designs can be differentiated by differing levels of prioritizing one form of data over the other, the combination of data in the research process, and whether the data collection takes place concurrently or sequentially. The order in which the data is collected is important to determine what type of mixed methods approach is employed (Driscoll et al., 2007; Greene et al., 1989; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2007). “Sequential designs in which quantitative data are collected first can use statistical methods to determine which findings to augment in the next phase” (Driscoll et al., 2007, p. 21). For the qualitative aspect, the phenomenological research which was used for this study was hermeneutic. Hermeneutical phenomenology includes the emphasis on hermeneutics or the method of interpretation and description (Toadvine et al., 2005). Interpretation was used with the open-ended answers of the interviews. The quantitative aspect of the research was conducted through two surveys.

A sequential explanatory strategy was employed. By using mixed methods research “a sequential researcher may be able to give voice to diverse perspectives... or to better understand a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2003, p. 217). Using sequential explanatory strategy was the most successful design for the study since it will yield the most results by using both qualitative and quantitative research and bring an overall quality for the educational study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The rationale of doing a mixed methods study is to use the strength of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses in another method by using both in this research study. The sequential explanatory strategy is characterized by the collection of quantitative data followed by qualitative data. The priority is given to the quantitative data (Greene et al., 1989). The

two methods are integrated during the data analysis and interpretation phase of the study. Sequential explanatory strategy can be conducted using a theoretical base or not. This design makes it easy to describe and report. The drawback to this design is the time involved using two different phases of data collection. This study will use the information from quantitative data to determine which participant will complete the qualitative aspect of the study (Creswell et al., 2003).

As with any method, there are advantages and disadvantages. Advantages are that the collection and analysis of structured surveys and open-ended interviews can provide important information on emergent or unexpected themes (Driscoll et al., 2007). Several disadvantages can be “the loss of depth and flexibility that occurs when qualitative data are quantitized” (Driscoll et al., 2007, p. 25). Analyzing and coding is sometimes difficult and time consuming. Reducing sample size in order to collect and analyze qualitative data is also another disadvantage.

The research studies used for this literature review were largely collected quantitatively. There were several qualitative studies that were case studies. The majority of studies from the series of teacher efficacy studies conducted by Tschannen-Moran and/or Woolfolk-Hoy and Hoy (1998, 2000, & 2001) were quantitative. These studies were used to construct the current OSTES survey instrument and used factor analysis to determine how the participants responded to the questions. The studies contain the OSTES survey in various forms until the final OSTES survey was finalized. According to Woolfolk-Hoy (2002) there are few longitudinal studies that track efficacy across early years of teaching (p. 2).

“Interpretive case studies and qualitative investigations are needed to refine our understanding of the process of developing efficacy” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 242). The case study about teacher efficacy by Milner and Woolfolk-Hoy (2002) was an important addition to the research of this study. The recommendation by the researchers for this study stated that “more qualitative studies may be needed to sharpen and broaden our knowledge about teacher efficacy” (Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2002, p. 15). Another case study about teacher efficacy that was important to this study contained three in depth interviews, collection of documents, and observation. The study by Saffold (2005) was conducted over a year period. This study identified the importance of using mentors to increase teachers’ efficacy. The last case study about teacher efficacy was completed by Yoon et al. (2006). This study explored the use of cases and case methods in influencing elementary preservice teachers’ efficacy beliefs. This study was different from the others as it discussed how case methods learned in class help to increase teacher efficacy after viewing a slide show presentation about case methods and becoming involved in an online discussion board. This study was conducted as a learning experience as opposed to the other studies that examine what teachers already believe based on their prior experiences.

The rest of the important research used in this study falls under qualitative or quantitative. There was a limited amount of research that was mixed method. This mixed methods study and research conducted with the sequential explanatory strategy will lead to a new group of literature to help to fill the gaps about teacher efficacy, preparedness and level of special education training.

### Other Methods

Other methods were considered for this study. At first, the researcher was thinking to concentrate only on qualitative research. The use of phenomenology and the case study method were explored. After much consideration, it was determined that this method did not give as much information as the researcher was looking for and did not provide sufficient data based on the research questions. The other method that was considered was quantitative research using a survey. This would also not yield the type of results necessary to adequately answer the research questions. This is how the mixed methods study came to be. The sequential transformative study was not chosen since it needed a theoretical base to guide the study. The sequential explanatory strategy best met the needs of the researcher since it uses both quantitative and qualitative research and is done in a sequential manner. Priority is given to the quantitative data. The sequential manner in which the data is collected is important so that not too much time elapses between the different instruments so that the participants are all within the same time frame. Participants should have a similar amount of time in the classroom to give a more even timeframe for the participants' reflections.

### Call for Further Research

The research in this literature review stated in many of the studies that more research is needed to complete the study in its entirety. This is also the case for this study. With inclusion taking place across America and beyond, special education training becomes an important aspect of teacher training. It is still unclear as to how much special

education training is necessary to be an effective teacher in an inclusive classroom with positive self-efficacy.

The studies that involved early childhood and elementary preservice teachers stated that special education training was necessary and some of the teacher education programs are beginning to have the preservice teachers have a better understanding of students with special needs. The secondary education studies stated that there was little to no training in special education. Both sets of teacher education programs have had the students involved in no field experiences with students with special needs. The one group that completed field work with special needs students was the special education teacher education program (Walbeck, Menlove, Garff, Menlove, & Harris, 2003). The implications of teacher education programs not giving students field experiences with special needs students is a difficult concept with so many schools involved in inclusion in 2008. Teacher education programs need to adapt and change the curriculum with the changing times (Grossman & Williston, 2002). There is a need for further research as to how much special education training is necessary to teach successfully in an inclusive classroom- regardless of the grade level (Gargiulo et al., 1997).

#### Summary

Teacher efficacy plays a big part in the life of the teacher. Teachers need to be well educated and highly qualified to teach what they are teaching (Clifford et al., 2005). The research on inclusion is inconclusive. Educators supporting inclusion and those resisting it can both find research to support their points of view (Phi Delta Kappa, 2007).

Supporters find that research shows that inclusion is beneficial to both special needs students as well as typically developing peers. Some of these findings are:

1. Achievement levels for special-needs students are as high or higher than self-contained classrooms
2. Special-needs students exhibit more appropriate social behavior because of higher classroom expectations
3. Special-needs students receive social support from students without disabilities and exhibit increased adaptability as they learn from teachers with a variety of teaching styles
4. Special-needs students enjoy higher levels of success (such as employment) after leaving high school
5. General education students have the advantage of an extra teacher in the classroom
6. General education students exhibit a greater acceptance of students with disabilities
7. The academic performance of general education students in inclusive classrooms is as good as or better than those in classrooms without special education student. (Phi Delta Kappa, 2007, issue 8)

On the other hand, those with opposing views can also find research to make valid their view of non-support:

1. Organizational — Class sizes may be too large or include too many special-needs students; there is insufficient time for collaboration and planning between co-teachers.
2. Attitudes — Teachers are not prepared to surrender or share classroom control.
3. Knowledge — General education teachers may not be prepared to work with special-needs students; special education teachers are often lacking in content knowledge.  
(Phi Delta Kappa, 2007, issue 8)

This review of literature represents the literature that shows a need for quality early childhood teacher training and the efficacy the teachers embrace. This dissertation was aimed at closing the gap in literature with new research about the preparedness of

first year early childhood educators for working with the diverse learners within their classroom, and its relationship to teacher efficacy.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

The sequential explanatory strategy was used in this mixed methods research study. In sequential designs, quantitative data are collected first. A statistical method can be used to begin the data process followed by another type of study design (Driscoll et al., 2007). Hermeneutical phenomenology includes the emphasis on hermeneutics or the method of interpretation and description such as interviews (Toadvine et al., 2005). Interpretation was used with the open-ended answers of the interviews. The quantitative aspect of the research was conducted through two surveys and three questions.

The study was focused on efficacy of first year early childhood teachers and perceived preparedness for teaching the diverse population of students within their classroom. A quantitative instrument, the Ohio State Teachers Efficacy Scale (OSTES), measured the different aspects of teacher efficacy such as student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The level of training of special education training was answered by the three questions added to the OSTES. Eight questions from the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) about preparedness were also completed.

### Quantitative Research Questions

1. What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?
2. What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

The qualitative aspect of the study included a scripted interview. After completing the OSTES, a subsample of participants was randomly chosen, utilizing a random number generator, for interviews. The first year early childhood teachers were interviewed using the four subgroup questions that are a part of the research question. These questions are listed below.

*Qualitative Research Questions*

3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?
4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?
5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?

Interviews were conducted with 12 purposive randomly chosen participants determined by the random sample generator taken from the sample of 28 first year early childhood teachers. I compiled the results of the OSTES scale and put the surveys into three sets according to their efficacy low, medium, and high. The preparedness survey was analyzed by a *t* test. The *t* test was used to test the hypotheses concerning the means in several populations. It is the most powerful of the statistical techniques for this type of study and analyzed the variances in order to derive at conclusions about the means.

The groups were collapsed into two groups, low and high, because the medium group was too large to get acceptable results. Because the data now fell into two

categories, low and high, a *t* test was conducted. The three questions about special education were totaled to determine the total amount of training each teacher has had. Because the data now fell into two categories, low and high, a *t* test was conducted. The 12 participants were purposively randomly chosen with a random number generator to continue with the study by choosing four participants from each set.

### Research Design and Approach

The design that was utilized for this mixed methods study was sequential explanatory strategy utilizing both the nonequivalency posttest only groups for the OSTES survey and a Likert scale of preparedness along with phenomenological research. The research was gathered using a variety of instruments such as the OSTES survey, the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006), three questions about special education training, and an interview. It was conducted over a period of several weeks. Phenomenological research was used to complete the study with the interview of the participants.

Using mixed methods research, a sequential explanatory researcher may or may not have a theoretical perspective. This sequential explanatory strategy was the most successful design for the study as it will yield the most results by using both qualitative and quantitative research and bring an overall quality for the educational study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The rationale of doing a mixed methods study is to use the strength of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses in another method by using both in this research study. “The purpose of the sequential explanatory design typically is to use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a primarily

quantitative study. Sequential designs in which quantitative data are collected first can use statistical methods to determine which findings to augment in the next phase” (Driscoll et al., 2007, p. 81). These two methods are augmented.

Figure 3 shows the direction the data collection took as it was completed. The left side is the quantitative aspect of the study and the right side shows the qualitative.

Phenomenological research helps the researcher to identify the essence of meaning related to the way in which human beings experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2003).

“The purpose of phenomenological research is to obtain a view into your research participants’ life-worlds and to understand their personal meanings (i.e., what something means to them) constructed from their lived experiences” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 364). A requirement of a phenomenological study is that the participants must have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). The phenomenon for this study is teaching first year early childhood teachers with inclusive classrooms.

Hermeneutical phenomenology is the specific type of phenomenology being used due to its belief in interpretation and description. The interview aspect of the research relied heavily on interpretation and description by that of the researcher. In phenomenology, the tradition from which this research study was approached, data are classified according to meanings for individuals (Creswell, 1998, p. 148). In keeping with the Creswell (1998) data analysis method for phenomenological research, group responses were examined and placed into meaning units (148). Data was recorded via field notes, journaling and digital voice recordings of in-depth interviews. Bracketing was utilized in order to set aside researcher bias (Hatch, 2002). According to Creswell (1998), open coding consists

of placing information about a phenomenon in segments. Within the different segments or categories, the investigator looks for subcategories and shows possibilities for data on a continuum (p. 57).

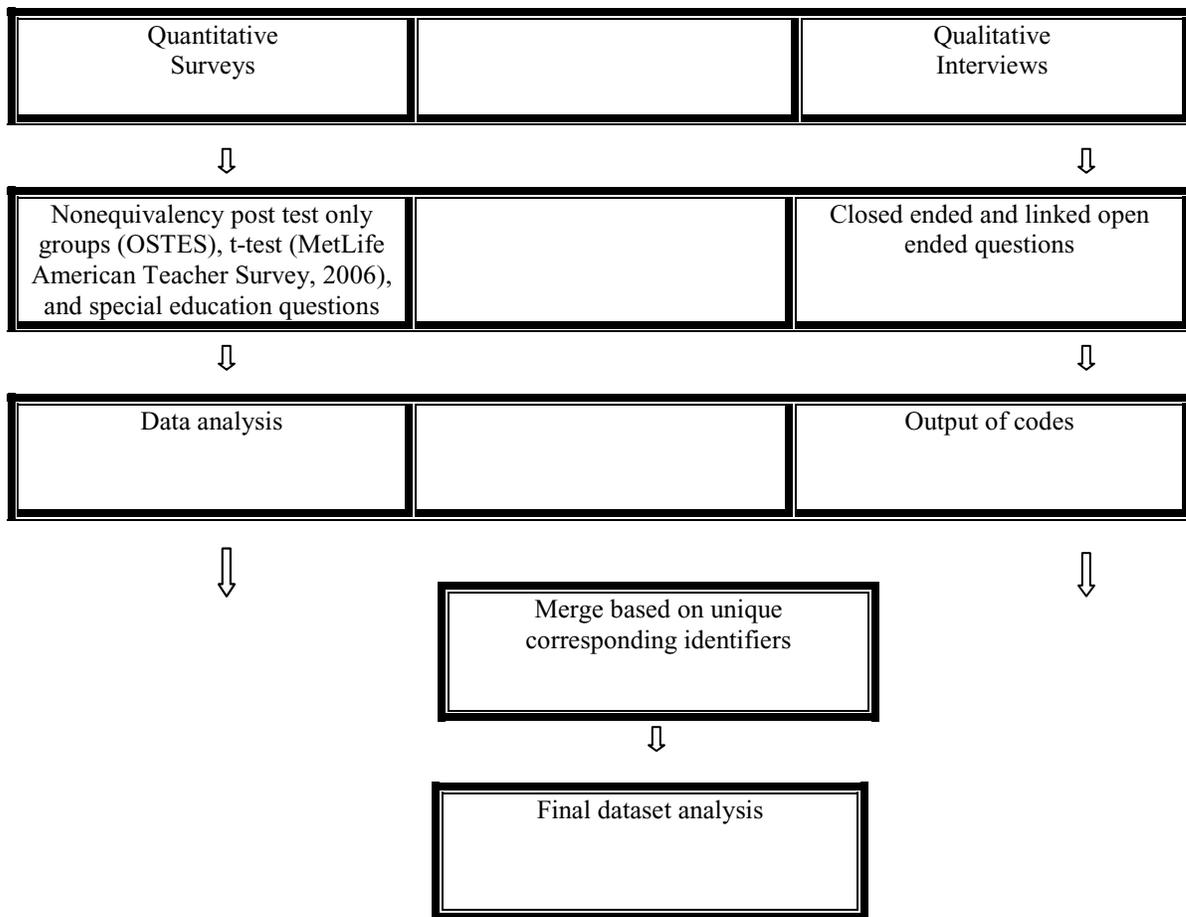


Figure 3. Sequential Explanatory Theory (Driscoll et al., 2007, p. 81)

The first stage of the study began with quantitative research. The OSTES survey, MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006), and the three questions about special education training were sent out electronically via email first. If the surveys had not been

received by the researcher by the date recommended on the surveys, another email with the surveys attached was sent. A reminder telephone call was a follow up for those who have not submitted the second prompting of the surveys. After the completed surveys are returned, the results were tabulated within a two week period. The information will then be utilized to determine which of the participants will continue to complete the study.

The OSTES survey was used to measure the independent variables of efficacy and level of special education training. The dependent variable in both cases was perceived preparedness. The three questions about special education training inserted in the OSTES questionnaire were used to determine the amount of time the teacher has had in special education training. The MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) was used to measure the dependent variable. Both hypotheses were tested using an independent sample *t* test.

The qualitative aspect of the study was the interview of 12 participants. This psychological approach to phenomenology emphasized the importance of the individual experiences of the first year early childhood teachers. Because the importance is on the individual teacher's view and not the group as a whole, this approach best met the needs of this study. Qualitative research is non-linear and non-sequential. Data collection and analysis often can proceed simultaneously. The in-depth interview questions and the three questions about special education training are open-ended, unlike the first phase of the study where the OSTES survey and the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) questions were close-ended. This two phased approach allows for the results to be more defined to ensure that the individual's views about teaching in a first year early childhood inclusive setting are clear.

The final step of the study was the interview. The interviews were conducted using a fixed set of open-ended questions found listed in this chapter that will answer the four sub-group research questions. Once the interviews were completed, the information gained was analyzed by putting the answers into themes and then it was coded according to likeness.

According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), there are five major research objectives in educational research: exploration, description, explanation, prediction, and influence. The mixed methods approach was able to address all of these objectives through the use of the surveys, and the interviews.

According to Creswell (1998) verification is “the Lincoln and Guba (1985) terms of trustworthiness and authenticity as general concepts to use in establishing the credibility of a study” (p. 201). It is also a process that occurs throughout data collection, analysis, and report writing of the study. A database was utilized to store the data. The purpose of this database is to make the data accessible to the researcher in an organized manner (Creswell, 1998). Verification of the research was ongoing throughout the study. The verification that occurred throughout this study utilized the transcribed data in the database to be able to triangulate the information received for these data collections.

#### Setting and Sample

For the population of this survey, all first year early childhood teachers from Midwest urban school districts in Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan were chosen to be sent surveys about teacher efficacy. The population consisted of a multicultural mix of teachers from a wide range of ages from 22 years of age to teachers who began teaching

later in life. The population contained male and female members. The 28 participants were identified by the school district principals as first year early childhood teachers. The principals identified the teachers. The OSTES survey (quantitative), three questions about special education training, and the MetLife American Teachers survey were sent electronically via email to the identified teachers by me. The OSTES, is also known as both the OSTES (Ohio State Teachers Efficacy Scale) and the OSU scale (Tschannen-Moran & Wolfolk-Hoy, 2001). I communicated with the teachers via email. A follow up email was sent after the recommended date on the surveys had passed; this message was followed up by telephone contact to remind the teachers to send the surveys back to me electronically. A sample calculator was used to determine that a sample of 28 was necessary to have a confidence interval of 95.

Twelve participants of the original 28 were purposively randomly selected for the interview using a random number generator, four representing each of the three levels of teacher preparedness. The 12 teachers were given the opportunity to complete the study in a 30 minute interview (qualitative). I contacted these participants via email or telephone to set up an appointment for the interview. The interview took place in the teachers' classrooms or via telephone.

The population size is limited as there is a shortage of new teachers being hired in the Midwest urban schools in Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan due to budget cuts and failed school levies in Ohio. Even though these districts are very large urban school districts (schools with over 700 students per school from approximately 20 schools per district), there are a limited number (less than 10 to 15) of teachers hired per school year.

The new hires replace retiring teachers and teachers who have left the district. The criteria and characteristics of the participants of this study include first year early childhood teachers who teach for the Midwest urban school district.

#### Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was to explain the study to appropriate school personnel, and participants and to answer any questions related to the study. The researcher will send the surveys to the building principals of the urban schools so that the principals have information on what is being examined. The building principals will identify first year early childhood teachers to me so that the surveys can be sent via email to the first year early childhood teachers in the urban school districts. The research department of the urban school districts will let me know which building principals are willing to have their teachers participate in the study. A list of the schools and principals within the urban school districts were identified in the permission section of the IRB form from the districts (08-05-08-0292520). I contacted the principals to discuss the survey and was given the information as to how many teachers meet the qualifications of the study. The names and contact information was obtained from the building principals. I was responsible for the collection and analysis of data along with the sharing of data with appropriate participants and personnel. I do not work for the Midwest urban school districts and has no prior connections to school personnel which would compromise the study.

The researcher compiled the results of the OSTES scale and put the surveys into three sets according to their efficacy low, medium, and high. The 12 participants were

purposively chosen with a random number generator to continue with the study by randomly choosing four from each set. The mean was rounded off to 45 and the participants were divided into low and high groups with the low group including all of the scores between 24-44 ( $f = 12$ ) and the high group including all the scores between 45-54 ( $f = 16$ ).

The same was done for the special education training groups. The results from the questions about special education training were totaled. The participants' scores were placed in three different sets (low, medium, and high) based on the total score of the special education training questions. The scores calculated to be above +1 SD equaled high special education training, and below -1 SD was low special education training with the scores between -1 SD and +1 SD equaling medium special education training. The groups were then collapsed into two groups low and high as the medium group was too large to get acceptable results. There was a score that skewed the data as it was an outlier (11) so the numbers were then separated by the median. The score above the median were determined to be high special education training and the scores below the median were determined to be low special education training. The median was rounded off to 2.5 and the participants were divided into low and high groups with the low group including all of the scores between 1 and 2 ( $f = 14$ ) and the high group including all the scores between 3-11 ( $f = 14$ ).

The two quantitative research questions that were asked were: What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom? and What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness

for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom? The questions for the OSTES survey about teacher efficacy, the three questions about special education training, and the questions from the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) can be found in Appendix B of this dissertation. These questions also are subquestions for the original research question: Are first year early childhood teachers taught enough about special education and making adaptations for learning in higher education and field experiences to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their classroom?

The level of first year early childhood teachers' efficacy was rated as low or high based on the OSTES survey score. The scores calculated to be above +1 SD will equal high efficacy, and below -1 SD was low efficacy.

The researcher conducted individual interviews with the teachers based on the three research questions, as listed below. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were tape recorded for accuracy. The researcher transcribed all of the answers and tabulated the results. The information was then coded. The researcher was responsible for the collection and analysis of data along with the sharing of data with appropriate individuals.

The interview questions were based on the original research question: How would first year early childhood teachers describe their experiences about whether they were taught enough about special education and making adaptations for learning during their preservice training and field experiences to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their inclusive

classroom? The sub-questions center on the central phenomenon of teacher training/teacher education. These questions were asked to determine the teachers' views on their previous education received before being hired for teaching at the urban school districts.

#### Quantitative Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

$H_0$ : There will be no significant difference between the low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

$H_a$ : There will be a significant difference between the low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

The MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) was used to determine the preparedness of the participants and the OSTES was used to determine efficacy

Research Question 2. What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

$H_0$ : There will be no significant difference between the low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

H<sub>a</sub>: There will be a significant difference between the low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

The level of special education training was determined by the three questions about the teachers' training that were added to the surveys. The independent level was measured by determining the level to which special education training the preservice teachers have been exposed. According to a recent study by Chang et al., (2005), it was discovered that only 40% of bachelor's programs required a course in educating and working with special needs children. Special education training was added up and totaled for the amount of special education training. A *t* test was utilized as the method of data analysis for this hypothesis since the data fell into two categories, low and high.

#### Qualitative Research Questions and Interview Questions

3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?
  - a. What opportunity have you had to have field experience in an inclusive classroom?
  - b. What did you gain from this experience?
  - c. What type of field experience did you have with diverse learners?
  - d. What did you gain from working with diverse learners?
  - e. In what grade did you do your student teaching?
  - f. What was the make-up of the classroom's diverse needs?



- d. What difficulties did you have adapting to the diverse needs of your students now as you are at the end of the school year?
- e. What kind of support do you receive from support staff? What kind of support staff (aide, paraprofessional, intervention specialist, etc.)?
- f. Is there an intervention specialist assigned to help you with your class? What kind of assistance did you receive from an intervention specialist?
- g. How many students are on a 504 plan?
- h. How many students have identified needs and are on IEPs?
- i. How many students have unidentified needs?
- j. What is your class size?
- k. What has been your biggest obstacle with working in an inclusive classroom?
- l. Is there anything further that you would like to share about working in your inclusive classroom? Successes and/or frustrations?

#### Data Collection

The role of the researcher in the data collection procedure was to collect, tabulate, and code themes of the research from the interviews. The researcher will also collect and tabulate the data collected from the surveys- both the OSTES and the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006). The three questions about special education training were added to the OSTES: How many credits have you taken in special education; How many hours of field experience have you completed; and How many hours in special education

training have you taken through the school district? The numbers were added up to determine the total level of special education training.

The researcher was the only person viewing data in its raw form. The researcher is the only person who will see the names and will code the names. The information was stored electronically via a computer disc and will be kept for five years. There is no other researcher involved in this study. The results were made available to the participants and the school personnel from the Midwest urban school districts.

The data for this study was collected sequentially. The information gained answered the questions asked in the study. The data was then triangulated. The information was compared to the hypotheses to see if there is a significant relationship. The information gained from the interview on teacher preparedness, and special education training was compared to the results of the quantitative questions on preparedness, efficacy, and level of special education. The researcher made use of these various sources to ensure that these pieces of evidence support each other. The study was based on the overarching research question: Are first year early childhood teachers taught enough about special education and field experiences to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their classroom?

### Qualitative Research Tools

The open ended interviews were the last tool used in this study to determine what the teachers believe about their teacher training. The interviews were conducted using a fixed set of open-ended questions found listed in this chapter that will answer the four

sub-group research questions. Once the interviews were completed, the information gained was analyzed by putting the answers into themes and then it was coded according to likeness.

### Reliability and Validity

The quantitative teacher efficacy survey, OSTES, has both reliability and validity. The three types of validity that traditionally can be demonstrated are content, criterion, and construct. The first, content validity, often referred to as “face validity,” refers to “the extent to which items on a measure assess the same content [and assess] how well the content material was sampled in the measure” (Rubio, Bert-Weger, Tebb, Lee & Rauch, 2003). Content validity was also established via an examination of instruments by an outside reviewer, the faculty content expert, a psychologist. The psychologist agreed that the items measured what it intended to measure.

In the second type of validity, criterion validity, a correlation is used to assess a statistical relationship between a measure and a criterion. Criterion validity can be “demonstrated by finding a statistically significant relationship between a measure and a criterion (Rubio et al., 2003). The OSTES was compared to the PTE (Personal Teaching Efficacy) factor by Gibson and Dembo (1984) where  $r = 0.48$  and  $p < 0.01$ .

The third type of validity, construct validity, is “the extent to which the test may be said to measure a theoretical construct or trait” (Rubio et al., 2003.). Construct validity can be either convergent or divergent. It was also suggested that a researcher can measure different constructs with different measures, and that a high correlation in these measures would indicate construct validity is present (Rubio et al., 2003). A high correlation of

convergent validity exists when measures of constructs that theoretically should be related to each other are. On the other hand, in divergent validity, constructs that theoretically should not be related to each other prove to be so. The 24 item long form of the OSTES shows factoring with varimax rotation that yielded the same three factors with loadings from 0.50 to 0.78. The three scales were explored and when the long and short forms highest loadings were compared, the factor structure remained intact. The structural validity showed a 65% variance for the short form. These number show good content as well as construct validity with all having the same standard deviation.

The following information has been taken from Tschannen-Moran & Hoy's (2001, p. 799) research: There was a third study conducted to further refine the OSTES. There is a short form and a long form of the OSTES. The OSTES was broken down by factor analysis and separated into three categories engagement, instruction, and management.

The reliability of the OSTES shows the alpha numbers of the long form for the OSTES is .94 and the alpha number from the short form for the OSTES is .90. For the purpose of this research, the short form was the form used. The alpha numbers for the three categories are as follows: engagement .81 with a SD of 1.2, instruction .86 with a SD of 1.2, and management .86 with a SD of 1.2. The reliability of the subscales from the long form was 0.91 for instruction, 0.90 for management, and engagement was 0.87 (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p. 799). This shows that the reliability and validity of the OSTES is high.

The MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) also has construct validity. The researcher discussed the MetLife American Teacher Survey with Markow who was the main researcher (D. Markow, person communication, March 17, 2008). Markow determined that there was construct validity.

The reliability of the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Expectations and Experiences of 2006 state that the results are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews involved and by the level of the percentage expressed in the results. The range of sampling variation that applies to percentage results for this survey is 95 in 100 that the survey results do not vary, plus or minus 5 with all persons represented by the sample. This shows the reliability of the MetLife Survey of American Teachers is high.

The three questions asked about special education training were totaled to determine the amount of special education training each teacher has received.

#### Researcher-Participants Relationship

It was expected that the participants would answer the questions from the surveys and the interview honestly. There are no right or wrong answers in any of the instruments since the information is based on their opinions. The method for establishing a researcher-participant working relationship is to establish a rapport through electronic method via email answering any questions that the participants may have about the study. I sent the survey to the building principals of the Midwest urban school district for their personal information about the study. The research department of the urban school districts let the researcher know which building principals were willing to have their

teachers participate in the study. A list of the schools and principals within the Midwest urban school district were identified in the permission section of the IRB form from the districts. The researcher is to contact the principals to discuss the survey and was given the information as to how many teachers meet the qualifications of the study. The names and contact information was obtained from the building principals. The researcher will give the participants a telephone number and an email address where the researcher can be reached. The researcher used the appropriate etiquette for electronic correspondence by responding within 24 hours and speaking with all participants who needed clarification or had questions or comments.

#### Data Triangulation

Data triangulation is built into the data collection and analysis of the sequential study since the data is integrated at interpretation. Sequential triangulation lends itself to better understand a phenomenon or process that is changing as a result of the study. It is important for the information gained to have accuracy in the findings of the qualitative study. "Triangulation is the term given when the researcher seeks convergence and corroboration of results from different methods studying the same phenomenon" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 424). Triangulation will lead to the evidence of quality. This will help to ensure the credibility of the findings of the survey.

For the quantitative aspect of the study, the concepts measured by the OSTES are comprised of efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies and classroom management as described by the authors. The level of preparedness was also measured by the MetLife American Teacher Survey

(2006). Added to the OSTES are questions about the level of special education. The information gained from the interviews will also be used to complete the study. All of the data collected from these instruments was compiled and triangulation was used to complete the data analysis.

### Data Analysis and Validation

The sequential data analysis and validation procedure for the qualitative descriptive research will utilize phenomenology. In phenomenology, the tradition from which this research study was approached, data are classified according to meanings for individuals (Creswell, 1998, p. 148). In keeping with the Creswell data analysis method for phenomenological research, group responses will also be examined and placed into meaning units (p. 148). Data was recorded via field notes, journaling, and digital voice recordings of in-depth interviews. Bracketing was utilized in order to set aside researcher bias (Hatch, 2002). According to Creswell, open coding consists of placing information about a phenomenon in segments. Within the different segments or categories, the investigator looks for subcategories and shows possibilities for data on a continuum (p. 57). These categories, along with the interviews, were used to determine the level of the teacher's special education training and preparedness to teach in an inclusive population of diverse learners. The accuracy of the findings was triangulated to ensure the credibility of the study. To maintain quality, or reliability and validity in the actual research study, the researcher will properly interpret responses from the participants, record accurately, include primary data along with all other data collected in final report, and write the results accurately (Key, 1997).

The quantitative data was analyzed to determine differences within a set of variables. The data from the OSTES survey was utilized to determine the three levels of efficacy that will determine the nonequivalent, post test only groups. The survey was completed online by the participants of the study via email and the results were tabulated by the researcher using the SPSS software. The MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) determined the level of perceived preparedness of the first year early childhood teachers. The three questions about special education training were totaled to determine the amount of special education training each teacher has completed. Inferential statistics was completed through the use of *t* tests for both the quantitative hypotheses. The qualitative data, the interview answers were coded to determine likeness. The interview data was collated and was compared and contrasted with the data collected from the quantitative research to determine the accuracy of the research question. The validity of both the qualitative and quantitative findings was checked by the use of triangulation. Triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.

#### Participants' Rights

The participants have the right of confidentiality. The participants were given consent forms (see Appendix C) that explain that the study involves research. They were told that they can choose to stop participating in the study at any time without penalty since involvement in this study is voluntary. The participants were told why they were selected for the research and the purpose of the research. The time frame was discussed with the participants of the study. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved

in the study and there was also no compensation for participating. All personal information is confidential such as their name, school affiliation, and place of employment. The letter of cooperation (Appendix D) was approved by the IRB from the school districts and by the IRB at Walden University.

### Summary

This study of teacher efficacy, special education training, and views of perceived preparedness for the classroom answers the research question: Are first year early childhood teachers taught enough about special education and making adaptations for learning in higher education and field experiences to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their classroom? There are three research questions that operationalize this broader question. This sequential transformative study was conducted through the OESTES survey, the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006), the three questions about special education training, and an in-depth interview.

The interviews of the teachers about the three subgroup research questions were then coded into themes. The qualitative data collected from the OSTES survey was run as nonequivalency post test only group on SPSS software. The MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) was totaled and was the dependent variable in the *t*-tests, and the three questions about special education training were totaled to determine the total amount of special education training that was determined by a *t* test. This information was combined using triangulation to check for method-appropriate strategy for finding the credibility of the qualitative analyses.

Chapter 4 will focus on the results of the quantitative and qualitative research data analysis and give the findings of each and a summary, conclusion, and recommendations in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results and data analysis with respect to the central research question: How do first year early childhood teachers describe their learning experiences in special education, and will their preservice training and field experiences enable them to make adaptations to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their inclusive classroom?

The subquestions involved in the quantitative research questions are:

1. What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?
2. What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

The subquestions involved in the qualitative aspect of this research consist of:

3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?
4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?
5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?

### *Organization of Chapter*

The quantitative results will be first, followed by the qualitative research results. Finally, the integration of the two research methods will be discussed. .

### *Quantitative*

This sequential explanatory mixed methods study determined the impact of efficacy and special education training levels on perceived preparedness among first year early childhood teachers from Midwest urban school districts in their diverse inclusive early childhood classrooms.

For the qualitative aspect phenomenological research, an interpretive inquiry based on the philosophy of hermeneutics, was used. The sequential explanatory strategy is characterized by the collection of quantitative data followed by qualitative data. The priority is given to the quantitative data (Greene et al, 1989). The two methods are integrated during the data analysis and interpretation phase of the study.

*Data collection process.* In order to collect the data, all first year early childhood teachers from Midwest urban schools were selectively chosen to send surveys about teacher efficacy, preparedness, and level of special education training (Appendix B). Urban school districts were chosen as the emphasis of this research. Schools that were identified as urban by the Departments of Education of Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan were then put into a database with the teachers' name and school. Ohio identified 22 school districts classified as urban, Michigan identified 15, and Kentucky identified 5 districts as urban.

During the initial contact with the building principals of the urban schools from Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan, it was discovered that there were 200 possible participants to be contacted via email or by phone or both. Of these 200, only 15 were initially identified by the urban school district principals as first year early childhood

teachers. The principals gave the contact information about the teachers to the researcher. In 60% of the original emails made, principals did not reply to the email request and so the email request was resent. A call to the principals to request the information did not yield enough information to obtain the minimum of 28 participants. In the 65 telephone calls made to the principals, they stated that they did not have any first year early childhood teachers. This was an insufficient amount of participants to hold research. It was then necessary to file another IRB to gain permission to use public data from the Departments of Education from Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan to acquire the list of all first time applicants for early childhood teaching license. A computerized list of all teachers in these states that had applied for a first time teaching license within the last school year was received.

Once the IRB was approved, the list of first time applicants in the field of early childhood were contacted via email and sent the surveys. This second attempt for participants yielded 151 more possible participants. Once the urban school districts were identified from the lists, more principals were contacted to verify the remaining names of teachers from the lists from the Departments of Education in Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan. This was done to assure that the teacher did indeed still teach there and qualified for the study by being a first year early childhood teacher. From this list of 151 possible first year teacher participants, 20 principals replied that the teacher no longer worked there. These emails also yielded identification and contact information for 47 teachers. Phone calls were made to the remaining school principals. In 59 phone calls, the principals stated that they did not want their staff participating in surveys at this time.

This resulted in personal contact information for 34 more teachers. Once the information was verified that the teacher was a first year early childhood teacher, the principal gave the teachers' contact information to the researcher for the 38 first year early childhood teachers for a total of 72 possible participants.

For the data collection, the possible participants were personally contacted via email by the researcher and provided with detailed information about the study to ensure that they met the criteria for participation and were willing to participate in the study. Consent forms were then sent to the participants (Appendix C & D). Once the teacher signified interest, the OSTES survey, the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006), and three questions about special education training (quantitative) were sent electronically via email to the 200 possible participants from the first data attempt that yielded 15 responses and to 72 identified teachers that yielded 13 responses. In all, 272 surveys were sent and only 28 were returned.

The OSTES survey instrument for first year early childhood teachers determined efficacy regarding teachers' views of teaching. The levels of preparedness about teaching in the inclusive classroom was determined by the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006). Three questions about special education training were added to the end of the OSTES to determine how much special education training each teacher had received:

1. How many credits have you taken in special education?
2. How many hours of field experience have you completed?
3. How many hours in special education training have you taken through the school district?

The time frame allowed for a week turn around to receive the answers from the possible participants. After a week, the teachers that did not respond to the email were sent a second email. After the second round of reminder emails did not yet yield more responses, phone calls were made to the remaining 50 teachers. The final result after 6 weeks was 28 returned surveys. This is a response rate of 7.9% of the possible 351 first year early childhood teachers from the Midwest urban school districts. It was originally anticipated that 100 surveys could be returned based on the large number of first year early childhood teachers from the Midwest instead only 28 returned and completed the survey section of the research.

*Surveys and special education questions.* After the 6 weeks of data collection, the data from the surveys and the three questions about the special education training were complete and ready for data analysis.

The independent variables were special education training and efficacy, with the dependent variable perceived preparedness. At this point two t-tests were conducted to evaluate the differences between the high and low levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness and the differences between the high and low special education training on perceived preparedness. The groups were collapsed into low and high for both independent variables to get data that yielded the most information for the study. More about this process will be discussed later in this chapter.

The OSTES scores were utilized to calculate the levels of teacher efficacy. Originally, anything above +1 SD was equated with high levels of teacher efficacy and below -1 SD was equated with low levels of teacher efficacy. The scores between -1 SD

and +1 SD equaled medium or moderate levels of teacher efficacy. However, the efficacy groups needed to be collapsed into two groups low and high as the medium group was too large to get acceptable results. With a sample of only 28, it was decided to collapse the groups into 2 groups instead of 3. The mean was rounded off to 45 and the participants were divided into low and high groups with the low group including all of the scores between 24-44 (frequency = 12) and the high group including all the scores between 45-54 (frequency =16). For the quantitative study, 3 groups were collapsed into 2 groups, but for the qualitative study the three groups were still utilized. All 28 respondents were female. Table 2 shows the states where the 28 participants teach and their level of special education training.

Table 2

*Participants' Level of Special Education Training Based by State*

<i>State</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Total</i>
Ohio	4	10	14
Kentucky	4	3	7
Michigan	3	4	7

The levels of special education undergraduate learning determined the total amount of special education training. The three questions about special education training were utilized to determine the level of training. Originally, the totals from the special education training were then divided into three categories: low, medium, and high levels

of training. The groups were then collapsed into two groups low and high as the medium group was too large to get acceptable results. There were outlier scores that skewed the data so the scores were then split into 2 groups based on the median. The scores above the median of 2.5 were determined to be high special education training and the scores below the median of 2.5 were determined to be low special education training. The low group included all teachers with the scores between 1 and 2 (frequency = 14) and the high group including all the scores between 3-11 (frequency = 14).

The MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) determined the perceived preparedness of the first year early childhood teachers for their inclusive diverse populations' special needs students. All 28 respondents were female. Table 3 shows the states where the 28 participants teach and their level of efficacy.

Table 3

*Participants' Level of Efficacy Based by State*

<i>State</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Total</i>
Ohio	4	8	12
Kentucky	5	3	8
Michigan	4	4	8

### *Quantitative Data Analysis*

This section of the study will present the analysis and results of the quantitative research questions. To complete the quantitative analysis, the two research questions were analyzed based on results of the data generated from the surveys.

*Research Question 1.* What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

H<sub>0</sub>: There will be no significant difference between the low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

H<sub>a</sub>: There will be a significant difference between the low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

This study utilized a quantitative nonequivalent post test only research design, using an independent *t* test. A *t*-test was utilized with the sample. There was no significant difference between the low ( $M = 26.17, SD = 6.94$ ) and high ( $M = 30.38, SD = 7.74$ ) levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom,  $t(26) = -1.486; p = .149$  (two-tailed). This was considered a low effect ( $d = -.063$ ).

Therefore, the null hypothesis for research question 1 was accepted, there was no significant difference between low and high levels of efficacy.

Table 4  
*Preparedness and Efficacy: Independent t-test*

<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Significance (2 tailed)	<i>M</i> Difference	Std. Error Difference
-1.486	26	.149	-4.208	2.831

*Research Question 2.* What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

H<sub>0</sub>: There will be no significant difference between the low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

H<sub>a</sub>: There will be a significant difference between the low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

There was no significant difference between the low ( $M = 29.79, SD = 7.91$ ) and high ( $M = 27.36, SD = 7.31$ ) levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom,  $t(26) = .843; p = .407$  (two-tailed). The effect size ( $d = 1.02$ ) was low.

Therefore, the null hypothesis from research question 2 was accepted: There was no significant difference among low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom (Table 5).

Table 5

*Preparedness and Special Education Training*

<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Significance (2 tailed)	<i>M</i> difference	Std. Error
.843	26	.407	2.429	2.880

*Qualitative*

A purposeful random number generator was utilized to determine which four participants were chosen from each set- low, medium, and high, to complete the qualitative portion of this study. For this aspect of the study, the three categories, low, medium and high levels of efficacy were kept for the qualitative analysis, even though the three categories were merged into two categories for the quantitative analysis in both the levels of efficacy and levels of special education training. The random number generator was used to get a sequence of numbers that lack any pattern. The breakdown of the different participants can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

*Final Number of Participants After Number Generator*

<i>State</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Total</i>
Ohio	2	4	6
Kentucky	3	1	4
Michigan	1	1	2

Research question 3 asked what role higher education plays in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach. The information gleaned from the teachers and the themes shows that higher education plays an important role in preparing the teachers to work with students with diverse needs. The absence of references to preparation gave insight. These teachers had the proper support from their cooperating teachers for working in an inclusive classroom. These same teachers also were able to successfully work in their own classrooms upon graduation.

Overall, the teachers with little to medium support from their cooperating teachers and had either low or medium levels of efficacy had mixed results from their student teaching. Those with medium level of efficacy had more success in the classroom than the teachers with low efficacy. This assumption is not set in stone as there are a few teachers from each group that make this statement not be correct a 100% of the time, but it does hold true for at least 80% of the time. Efficacy and preparation play a big factor in the success of the student teacher.

Research question 4 asked what first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population. The teachers fell into the three groups of not feeling prepared by their university, feeling adequately prepared, and being fully prepared by their university.

The level of preparation that the teachers received is directly proportionate to their level of efficacy. The teachers who were not well prepared also had low efficacy. The

teachers who believed that they had adequate preparation, had medium efficacy; and the teachers who were of the opinion that they were fully prepared, had high efficacy.

Research question 5 did not yield enough information or contain a set pattern used to determine results for each efficacy group. Each was based more on a personal basis than overall responses that would fit onto the different levels of efficacy. The information does not support the question either way.

The participants who had little special education training also had low preparedness and low efficacy. The teachers who had a high level of special education training also had high efficacy and high preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. The teachers who had high efficacy and high levels of special education training really enjoyed their jobs.

There were no differences found in the middle groups that had a medium level of special education training, a medium level of efficacy and a medium level of preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. Some of the teachers with medium levels of efficacy and medium levels of special education training liked teaching but did not like all of the paperwork involved with the students. They were uncomfortable with not knowing how to fill it out. They also wanted to have more assistance with the students such as an aide or more interaction with the intervention specialist. They liked their jobs but were unsure of their effectiveness as a teacher with so many children with diverse needs. Teacher A stated that she taught in an inclusive class even though she had only a moderate level of special education training. She stated that she was surprised by

all of the different needs of the students. She said she really had to go and do some research so that she was able to know about each child's disability.

### *Qualitative Data Collection Process*

*Introduction.* The sequential explanatory mixed methods strategy utilized phenomenology to explain and help interpret the qualitative data. Polkinghorne (1989) and Husserl (1931) described phenomenology as the exploration of the structures on the human consciousness in human experiences. In this phenomenology study, data were classified according to meanings for individuals (Creswell, 1998). In keeping with the Creswell data analysis method for phenomenological research, individual responses were also examined and placed into meaning units (1998). In phenomenological tradition, data were gradually reduced into clusters and eventually identified as essential elements (Moustakis, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). Data were recorded via digital voice recordings (tape recorded) of in-depth interviews. Bracketing was utilized in order to set aside researcher bias (Hatch, 2002).

According to Creswell (1998), open coding consists of placing information about a phenomenon in segments. Within the different segments or categories, the investigator looks for subcategories and shows possibilities for data on a continuum (p. 57). These categories, along with the interviews, were used to determine the level of the teacher's special education training and preparedness to teach in an inclusive population of diverse learners. The specific examples of how this process was done will be explained in the interview section.

### *Qualitative Analysis Interviews*

In order to determine who would be interviewed for the qualitative section of the study, the surveys were placed in three different sets (low, medium, and high) based on the efficacy score of the OSTES survey before being randomly picked using a random number generator. Four participants from each set were selected to continue with the study for the interview section of the study with the use of a random number generator. The interview was structured around the three qualitative research questions. I decided to keep the three sets of low, medium, and high groups for the qualitative research so that it may yield the most results for the data from the interviews.

Interviews were conducted with the 12 participants to get an in depth look at the first year early childhood teachers' perceptions and experiences in the classroom. Each of these structured interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The questions were scripted (Appendix E) and the interviews were tape recorded for accuracy. All of the answers were transcribed verbatim. Within the different segments or categories, subcategories were drawn that showed possibilities for data on a continuum. The interviews were used to help determine a more in-depth level of the teacher's special education training and preparedness to teach in an inclusive population of diverse learners.

### *Recordings*

The 12 participants were interviewed. Due to the fact that the participants lived over a tri state area, interviews were conducted over the phone at the convenience of the participant. Of the 12 interviews, 10 were conducted over the weekend and 2 were conducted during the school week (Table 5). The day before the interview, the researcher

verified the day and time of the interview via email with each participant and then gave the participant the opportunity to ask any questions that she may have had or for clarification if needed. The interview was to be formal since it was structured and so the questions were sent via email before the interview to help put the participants at ease.

With each interview, only the scripted questions were asked (Appendix E). The researcher kept track of where the interview was headed and would put the participant back on track as needed. Even though the interview had scripted questions, it was necessary to use probing questions at times to keep the interviews flowing. With the use of probing questions a response could be shortened when it went on too long or for clarification or to help elaborate when the participant did not give a detailed enough answer to adequately answer the question. Hatch (2002) stated that probes are not prepared ahead of time but are used as needed as follow up questions to retrieve an answer such as: Why do you believe this? I am interested in what you said about . . . can you explain that to me again? or Can you give me a specific example of that? Flexibility was used while interviewing the participants. Hatch (2002) stated that flexibility while conducting a formal interview is what distinguishes it from a standardized interview. Even though all participants were asked the same questions, they were not particularly asked in the same order rather it was based on their answers. The researcher put a check beside each question that was answered before it was asked or was answered. In a standardized interview, all participants are asked the same questions in the same order, using the same verbiage (Hatch, 2002). Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes (See Appendix F).

All of the answers were transcribed verbatim onto large sheets of paper. A new piece of paper was used for each individual participant. Coding was then used to determine the outcome of the data.

Coding consisted of placing information about the phenomenon into like segments. Within the different segments or categories, subcategories were drawn that showed possibilities for data on a continuum. The code words were then grouped around a specific concept in the data which is called categorizing. Categorizing the data required creativity to group the data in order to reduce the number of code words with which to work. The code notes were then written and coding paradigms were created to analyze the data further by making comparisons about the context of the interviews. The codes were then used to find patterns within the data. The information was then coded by hand using different colored highlighters. Each highlighter was given a specific theme and then when all of the coding was complete, the patterns were evident by the varying colors of the highlighters. The data were then put into categories (Table 7).

Table 7

*Qualitative category and participants' responses*

Question	Category and Participants	Category and Participants	Category and Participants
3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?	No experience with inclusive classroom at all before beginning her first teaching job. 3 participants	Minimal experience with inclusive classroom before beginning her first teaching job. 5 participants	Moderate experience with inclusive classroom before beginning her first teaching job. 4 participants

*(table continues)*

Question	Category and Participants	Category and Participants	Category and Participants
4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?	Not very prepared from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population.  3 participants	Prepared from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population.  7 participants	Very prepared from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population.  2 participants
5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?	There are so many things that impede first year teachers working in an inclusive classroom.  3 participants	There are an equal amount of pros and cons of each for the first year teacher working in an inclusive classroom.  7 participants	There are more pros than cons for the first year teacher working in an inclusive classroom.  2 participants

Bracketing was also used. Bracketing was used to suspend the researcher's judgment about what is real until a more certain basis is founded (Hatch, 2002). The recordings were kept on the cassette tape and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for five years..

There are three qualitative questions in the study which helped to gain more understanding of the effect of teacher training and efficacy on teacher preparedness. The breakdown of how each specific interview question relates to these research questions can be found later in this chapter and in Appendix E.

### *Profile of Interviews*

The participants were eager to share their opinions and views about what it was like teaching in an inclusive classroom as first year teachers. The interview questions were sent to each participant before the interview so that they could have time to prepare their answers. This led to the interviews being relatively short with approximately 30 minutes allotted per interview. The participants appeared to be comfortable as was the researcher. They were willing to discuss their experiences as first year teachers. The teachers interviewed were friendly and pleasant. Many of the questions prompted quick responses and approximately six of the questions required more lengthy answers. It was an unfortunate time of the year to be conducting a study as the teachers were getting ready to go back to school or had just started the new school year and had many things to attend to get ready for the students. One of the participants, Abby, was ready to get the me of the phone quickly so she could go back to work, while the other 11 were comfortable sharing their experiences.

### *Profile of the Teachers*

*Introduction.* The participants were placed into three different sets based on their levels of efficacy: low, medium, and high. In order to facilitate data analysis, each subgroup was given a letter name. Group A consisted of the teachers with low efficacy, and the teachers in this group were given pseudonyms beginning with the letter A. Group B contained the teachers with a medium level of efficacy, and the teachers in this group were given pseudonyms beginning with the letter B. The final group, Group C was the teachers with high efficacy, and the teachers in this group were given pseudonyms beginning with the letter C. There were distinctions from all of the participants as to what

level of special education training they had, as they all differ within the groups, and no significant difference was found to exist based on special education training.

*Ann.* Ann is a 1st grade teacher with low efficacy and low special education training. Ann had some field placements in classes that contained children with diverse needs. She did not have any experience with inclusive classrooms until her student teaching. She taught in an inclusive classroom during her first year after graduating. She had a paraprofessional and a teacher's aide to assist her in the classroom with her 20 students. She had had four students on IEPs that had cognitive needs. Her voice showed the enthusiasm she has for teaching and she talked about her love for working in the inclusive classroom. She believed that early childhood teachers need more special education training and wished that she had more training.

*Abby.* Abby is a third grade teacher with low efficacy and low special education training. Abby did not have field experience or student teaching in any classrooms that contained students with special needs. She also stated that she does not have any students with diverse needs in her classroom and has never had since she is an early childhood teacher, not a special education teacher. According to Abby, the intervention specialist pulls five students from her homeroom to spend the day in the resource room. She feels that these students are not "her concern since they spend the day in the resource room." She reported that she did not know the make up of the needs of these students since they are with the intervention specialist. She stated that according to the intervention specialist that one of the students should qualify for the multiple handicapped unit soon but other than that she does not know what the disabilities are. Abby has 20 students in her class

but only works with 15 of them. Abby was anxious to get back to her work and gave short answers during the interview. She is an early childhood teacher who felt that she should not have to work with special needs students since she went into regular education, not special education. She just wanted to work with regular students.

*Ashley.* Ashley teaches 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She has low efficacy and low special education training. Ashley had minimal field experience in classes that contained students with diverse needs. She had 22 students in her classroom with four of them on IEPs for developmental delays and believed that there were two more students who were unidentified. . She had no aide and would very much like to have one. Ashley felt that she did not have enough special education training and felt as though she needs to have more. She enjoys teaching in her inclusive classroom.

*Angela.* Angela teaches first grade and has low efficacy and low special education training. Angela had little experience in an inclusive classroom before graduating and getting her own inclusive classroom but she did have a lot of experience in classrooms with diverse learners throughout all of her field placements in college. She felt overwhelmed at the beginning of the school year but feels much better now that she has a year of experience. Ashley has 22 students in her class and an interventions specialist comes to her room a few hours a week to do whole class instruction. She had one student with unidentified needs. Her students in her class had needs that range from ADD, ADHD, mild autism, Asperger's, and cognitive delays. She loves her job but wishes that the paperwork would go away so she could spend more of her time teaching.

*Betty.* Betty teaches 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She has medium efficacy and high special education training. Betty has a bubbly personality. She had no experience in inclusive classrooms but did spend all of her field experience in classrooms with students with diverse needs. She has 19 students in her class. Six students are on IEPs and one student had unidentified needs. She feels that although she had a good special education background, it was too broad. She wished that it had been more specific about the different types of needs students can have. She is a strong believer that early childhood teachers need more special education training. She had a student in a wheel chair with a catheter and was “scared to death that it would fall out” while she was teaching. She stated that she was uncomfortable with medically fragile students only because she is not medically trained. Her students had developmental delays and a student had spina bifida. She has both an aide and an intervention specialist that works with her students. The intervention specialist comes on certain days of the week and her aide is full time. She loves her job but wished she had more time for common planning for the teachers that she works with.

*Brittany.* Brittany teaches 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She has medium efficacy and low special education training. She had limited experience in inclusive classrooms as an undergraduate until her student teaching. She had all of her field experiences in classrooms with diverse learners. She loves the empathy that the students get from working with special needs students. Her enthusiasm for teaching and for working with her students is contagious. There are four students on IEPs and two more unidentified students in her class of 20. She does not have an aide but does have an intervention

specialist that she team teaches with several times a week. She believes that there is too much testing of children. Her students that are identified with disabilities have autism, ADD, ADHD, and cognitive delays. She is grateful that she can be a part of the students' lives as they come from broken and dysfunctional families. She stated that some of the mothers sell their children's ADD or ADHD medicine at the end of the month for cash and the children really suffer when they cannot concentrate or learn when they are used to having their medicine. She enjoyed showering them with love and helped to keep them safe when they are with her. She worked hard to be the best teacher she can be.

*Brenda.* Brenda teaches 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She has medium efficacy and low special education training. She had limited experience with inclusive classrooms until she graduated and had her own classroom. She did have a rich background of working with students with diverse needs throughout all of her teachers training. She is very happy with her progress since she began teaching. At first she was scared but now she loves it. Brenda has an aide but states that she really does not help much. The intervention specialist comes in once a week to assist the children that need it. There were 21 students in her class; five of which are on IEPs and one who was unidentified. The majority of the needs come from students who are LD (learning disabled), ADD and ADHD. She adores her students and is grateful to her school district because she gets the opportunity to go to workshops for professional development. Her biggest hurdle is planning. She stated that there is so much to do and so little time to do it. She stated that she was not the best student when she was in college but she is a much better teacher.

*Becky.* Becky teaches kindergarten. She has medium efficacy and high special education training. She worked in an inclusive classroom for field training during her junior year called a junior block. She had many experiences working in classroom with students who had diverse needs throughout all of her education courses. She was both scared and excited at the same time when she began teaching in her classroom. She had an aide full time in her classroom. She also had access to the intervention specialist in the building but stated that the intervention specialist is overworked and does not spend much time with the teachers. In her class of 19, she had 4 students who qualified for IEPs and 4 students with unidentified needs. Her biggest frustration is that parents will either refuse to sign the paperwork for testing for one reason or another, or that they cannot locate the parents to sign the paperwork to have the students tested. She also stated that the parents rarely give their children their ADD or ADHD medicines and she has difficulty getting them to pay attention. She feels badly for the students since she knows that they would like to be on their medicine so that they can have a better day. She worked hard to create a community of learners much like a family. Her students had ADD, ADHD and many of them had developmental delays. She was proud of the way her students worked so well together to resolve issues quickly.

*Carol.* Carol teaches 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She has high efficacy and high special education training. Carol did all of her student teaching in an inclusive classroom and all of her other field experiences were done in classrooms with diverse learners. She gained an experience that shaped her life in ways that she could not have imagined. She learned how to teach with empathy, saw how much empathy the students had for one another,

and learned how to form a community of learners. She had no aide in her classroom of 24 students. The intervention specialist teaches with her on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the afternoon for an hour. She had four students on IEPs for autism, ADD, ADHD, and cognitive delays. She also had two students with unidentified needs. Carol was passionate about what should be done for the children in her classroom. She believed that the school district should pay for year round speech and language therapy for the students who really need it. She states that it takes a month before they are back to where they were before the school year ended. She did not understand why they will not pay for it. She was also frustrated by the fact that not all parents come to conferences or bother to sign the paperwork that she sends home. She sent the paperwork home for students to be tested and the parents would not sign it even after she had talked to them. She wanted all of the children in her class to be successful. She felt that her university did not prepare her for the “real life” stuff that goes on in the classroom. She did not know how to do book orders, create her own schedule, or do field trip slips. She had to learn on the job. Even though the paperwork was overwhelming at times, she loved her job and found it to be rewarding.

*Cara.* Cara teaches 1<sup>st</sup> grade. She has high efficacy and high special education training. Cara completed half of her student teaching placement in an inclusive classroom. Her other placements had all been in classrooms with diverse needs. At first she was overwhelmed in her own classroom but now she loves every minute of it. She had an aide and an intervention specialist that worked with her students. She team taught with the intervention specialist three days a week. Cara had eight students on IEPs for

Asperger's, autism, ADD, ADHD and cognitive delays. She became frustrated that she does not have enough planning time and had to email the other teachers each night to coordinate their plans. She felt that when she is at home, it should be family time. Cara believed that her special education training was great. She loves her job.

*Carly.* Carly teaches 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She has high efficacy and low special education training. She completed all of her student teaching in an intervention classroom. This was the first experience working with diverse learners. Carly used strategies based on Gardner's multiple intelligences theory within her classroom of 19 students, 8 of which are on IEPs. Of these eight students, some of them were pulled out for instruction in the resource room for reading/math or both. Carly taught in a very disadvantaged area and had many students who were behind developmentally. The other needs that were addressed in her classroom are cognitive delays, ADD, ADHD, and a child that possibly would qualify for multiple handicapped. Many of her students rarely come to school and the principal does not believe in retention so they just get passed along to the next grade regardless of their skills set. Due to this problem, Carly had four more children who had unidentified needs. Carly stated that the students do not do their homework, mostly because her students have better skills than their parents. She had an aide and the building has an intervention specialist who helped the teachers to plan when she is able. Carly's biggest complaint was the lack of planning time. Her biggest accomplishment was that her students accept everyone in the classroom regardless of race, ethnicity, or learning abilities. That made her very proud to be their teacher.

*Chloe.* Chloe teaches 1<sup>st</sup> grade. She has high efficacy and high special education training. She had an amazing experience in the inclusive classroom that she was assigned for half of her student teaching. This was her first experience in an inclusive classroom. She had many other experiences in classrooms with diverse learners from all of the other field work throughout her education courses. Chloe felt completely prepared for teaching when she graduated, except for one student with leg braces. She was not medically trained so she felt uneasy about what to do to physically to help her student if she would fall. After it really did happen, she found that she was able to help without any difficulties. Chloe had a class size of 25 with six students on IEPs and three students with unidentified needs. The students with identified needs are ADD, ADHD, cognitive difficulties, and spina bifida. She team taught with the intervention specialist every day. She adored her students as it can be heard in her voice when she speaks of them. She was proud of the empathy that her students showed one another. Chloe loved her job and cannot wait to go to work each day.

*Table 9 Teacher Efficacy and Special Education Training*

Teacher Training in Special Education	Low Efficacy (LE)	Medium Efficacy (ME)	High Efficacy (HE)
Low Training (LT)	Ann Abby Ashley Angela	Brittany Brenda	Carly
High Training (HT)		Betty Becky	Carol Cara Chloe

*Qualitative Research Questions*

In order to obtain data regarding the subjects' teaching experience, qualitative data were obtained through interviews. This data will be included in this section, addressing the following research questions. The interview questions asked for each research question are included.

3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach? (Table 8 and Figure 4)
  - a. What opportunity have you had to have field experiences in an inclusive classroom?
  - b. What did you gain from this experience?
  - c. What type of field experience did you have with diverse learners?
  - d. What did you gain from working with diverse learners?
  - e. In what grade did you do your student teaching?
  - f. What was the make-up of the classroom's diverse needs?
  - g. What support did you receive from your cooperating teacher in working with diverse learners?
4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population? (Table 9 and Figure 5)
  - a. How well do you feel that your university fully prepared you to teach in an inclusive classroom?

- b. What were your initial feelings when you started working with diverse learners while at the university or in the classroom?
  - c. How do you feel about working with children with diverse needs now?
  - d. What difficulties did you have adapting to the diverse needs of your students initially?
  - e. How adequate was the special education training you received from your university now that you are working in your own classroom?
5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom? (Table 10 and Figure 6)
- a. How do you feel about working with children with diverse needs now?
  - b. What types of diverse needs are addressed among the children that you teach in your classroom?
  - c. What did you do to make it easier to adapt to working with diverse learners?
  - d. What difficulties did you have adapting to the diverse needs of your students now as you are at the end of the school year?
  - e. What kind of support do you receive from support staff? What kind of support staff (aide, paraprofessional, intervention specialist, etc.)?
  - f. Is there an intervention specialist assigned to help you with your class? What kind of assistance did you receive from an intervention specialist?

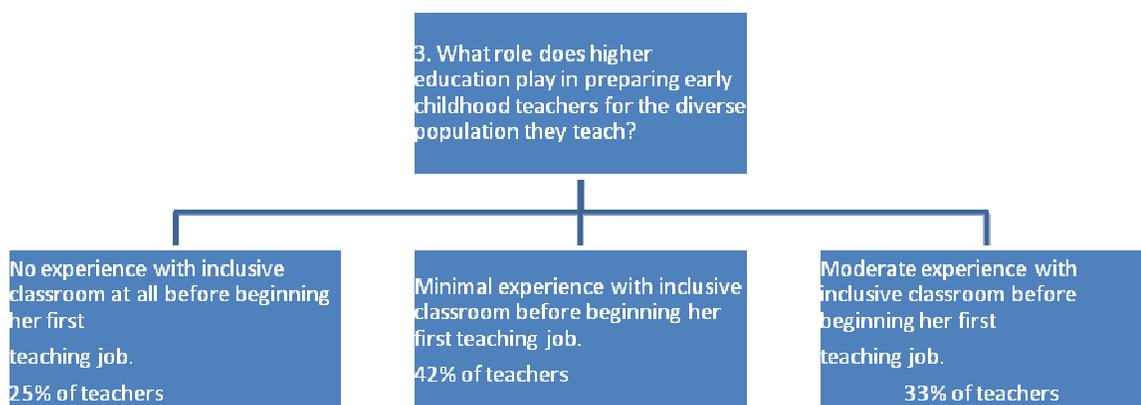
- h. What types of diverse needs are addressed among the children you teach in your classroom?
- i. How many students are on a 504 plan?
- j. How many students have identified needs and are on IEPs?
- k. How many students have unidentified needs?
- l. What is your class size?
- m. What has been your biggest obstacle with working in an inclusive classroom?
- n. Is there anything further that you would like to share about working in your inclusive classroom? Successes and/or frustrations?

#### Qualitative Data Analysis

The three qualitative research questions were analyzed by the researcher, based on results of the data generated from the interviews. Their answers to the scripted questions helped to clarify why teachers believe what they do about their preparedness, efficacy and their teacher training. The answers of the participants were coded into different themes based on their responses by highlighting similar answers with different colored markers or highlighters. Each question was initially analyzed in terms of the themes that were generated from the total group, followed by the summary of the answers for the three sub-groups based on teacher efficacy for each group of interview questions. Each section is concluded with a discussion of how these results inform the research question.

#### *Research Question 3*

What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach? The first question addressed the issue of higher education and its role in preparing early childhood teachers for working with diverse populations. Teachers were asked about their experiences in higher education. To put the information together, it was found that the answers fell into three categories. The breakdown was found that 25% of the teachers had no experience with inclusive classrooms before beginning her first teaching job, 42% had minimal experience with inclusive classrooms, and 33% had extensive experience before beginning her first teaching job (Figure 4).



*Figure 4.* Teacher Experience in Diverse Classrooms Prior to Teaching

The interview questions for this research question fell into two topics: field experiences and support by the cooperating teacher during student teaching. The answers from four of the interview questions a – d were pooled to discover themes for the first topic, and interview question g was used to discover themes for the second topic.

*Field Experiences.* Interview questions A-D were combined as they pertained to field experience.

- a. What opportunity have you had to have field experiences in an inclusive classroom?
- b. What did you gain from this experience?
- c. What type of field experience did you have with diverse learners?
- d. What did you gain from working with diverse learners?

The information gleaned from the 12 participants yielded four themes for these four interview questions: gaps in higher education curriculum, personal growth, empathy, and lack of professional support from the school district.

*Theme: Gaps in higher education curriculum.* When asked about how many of the participants worked in an inclusive classroom, nine out of the twelve participants stated that they had limited to no experience working in such a classroom. Although that was their response, these same teachers had also stated that they had worked in classrooms with students with diverse needs for field experiences and student teaching.

As this theme emerged, it was noted that all of the teachers from the low efficacy group (Ann, Abby, Ashley, and Angela) and all of the teachers from the medium efficacy group (Betty, Brittany, Brenda, and Becky) stated that they did not have any experience with inclusive classrooms. Only one teacher from the high efficacy group (Chloe) stated the same. These teachers were not taught the proper terminology from special education about what inclusive classrooms really means since all of them indicated they worked with children with special needs. All of these teachers had low special education training

except for Betty, Becky, and Chloe. Their programs in higher education did not teach the students what an inclusive classroom really entailed or they would have understood that working with students the classroom with diverse needs is in fact inclusive education. One teacher (Abby) stated that she “did not work with any students with diverse needs ever because she was an early childhood teacher, not a special education teacher.” Abby believed that all of her students from her field experiences and from her own classroom had no diverse needs whatsoever and that she did not have responsibility for students with diverse needs.

Teachers did not have specific assignments when doing the field experiences as undergraduates related to working with children with special needs. Three of the teachers (Ashley, Angela, and Brenda) only did observation in the field and avoided contact with the students with diverse needs as they only worked with the typically developing students. As it was not specified as to what students they should work with in their field experiences by their higher education professors, they chose to work with small groups or one-on-one instruction. They did not have any specific assignments to do any work with the students with diverse needs. This was another gap in the higher education curriculum.

Only two teachers out of the twelve participants mentioned that they learned more classroom management skills for working with diverse populations in the classroom during their field experiences and student teaching. Ashley learned good classroom management skills during her student teaching. Brenda stated that she was able to “observe classroom management skills that she learned about in her education classes” at the university. Good classroom management skills are crucial to successful learning and

teaching. One would wonder if classroom management was being taught as a part of the curriculum in higher education for only two inexperienced teachers to have mentioned it.

*Theme: Personal growth.* The comments made by four of the teachers showed that they had made personal growth from their field experiences and student teaching. After sitting in on an IEP meeting as undergraduates, Angela and Becky had empathy for the parents involved in the process. Angela stated, “There were so many people at the IEP meeting. I never thought that the school district would have so many people involved. I felt bad for the parents since they were outnumbered by the school personnel.” Becky learned “how much extra planning is necessary to meet all of the students’ needs” when she observed the IEP meetings.

Brittany, Carol and Chloe all learned how to teach with empathy from their field experiences. Brittany learned that it was “was not only the responsibility of the intervention specialist to work with students with needs” after having a cooperative teacher who believed it was not her responsibility to work with the students that are pulled out for instruction from the intervention specialist. She felt badly for the students who did not get the same treatment as the typically developing students in the classroom by the classroom teacher. Carol learned that by having empathy for her students, she set an example to the students for them to model. Chloe stated, “All students are capable of learning and that they are deserving of a good education.” She believed in each of her students and that positive thinking helps her to teach with empathy.

All of the teachers who had empathy for their students belonged to the medium and high efficacy groups. There were no teachers from the low efficacy group who

discussed empathy in their interviews. Even though Chloe had high special education training, she was still uncomfortable with her knowledge of the different needs that her students had in her classrooms. To gain more knowledge about her students, she “researched the different types of needs in the classroom so that she could be knowledgeable and do what was best for each of them.” These four students showed that they went above and beyond what the typical teachers from this study accomplished with growing their own personal knowledge and growth.

*Theme: Empathy.* When asked what was learned from working with diverse learners, three of the teachers (Brittany, Carol, and Chloe) believed that working closely to form a community of learners was important. They all stated that they learned how to show empathy and teach the students empathy. This was invaluable in their classroom as the typically developing students showed empathy for their atypical peers. They were all working together as a whole. The students all helped one another, no matter whether they had diverse needs or not. This helped the learning process and the atmosphere in the classroom. Having a positive environment helps all of the students to learn. One teacher that believed that empathy among the children came from the medium efficacy group (Brittany) and the other two teachers (Carol and Chloe) came from the high efficacy group. Carol and Chloe also had high special education training and Brittany had low special education training.

*Theme: Lack of professional support from school district.* When asked what she learned from working with diverse needs students, Betty expressed her frustration at the lack of support from her administration and from the intervention specialist in her school.

She had made requests for assistance but did not feel that she got the help that she needed. She stated, “The intervention specialist is overworked and had very little time to meet and plan with her.” She felt “all alone trying to do things that she had no idea how to do or where to begin.” Betty had medium efficacy and had high special education training. Training from the school district would benefit Betty and her students. Having time to work with her colleagues would also be to her advantage to gain the confidence to complete her job effectively.

*Differences among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy.* Upon compilation of the data from the interviews it was found that there were differences among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy. The teachers from the low efficacy group had gaps from their higher education experience. These gaps included the understanding of what inclusive education is and having field experiences with no guidance or specific assignments to work with diverse learners. Abby believed that she had no experience working with students with diverse needs and would never have to work with them since she was an early childhood teacher. The only teacher from this group that stated that she had gained any personal growth in her field experiences or in her student teaching was Angela who had empathy for the parents involved in IEP meetings.

The medium efficacy also had gaps in their higher education experience. They too did not understand the difference between working with diverse learners and working in an inclusive classroom. They also had a lack of specific assignments to work with diverse learners. There was only one teacher who had stated that she had gained personal growth.

Becky gained empathy for parents involved in IEP meetings. To this point, these results mirror those of the low efficacy group. Brenda learned more about her experiences from higher education in regards to classroom management. Betty lacked support from her school district administration and did not have enough interaction with the intervention specialist to learn from the experience. Brittany had a sense of empathy and worked with her students to create a community of learners. The teachers from the medium efficacy group showed that they had more experience than that of the low efficacy group.

The high efficacy group only had one teacher, Chloe, who stated that she did not have any experience with inclusive classrooms even though she had a high level of special education training. Carol and Chloe learned how to teach with empathy and also to create a community of learners that supported all of the students in their classrooms. This group did not report on specific troubles in their training from their higher education experiences.

A pattern emerged in the findings. The higher the efficacy of the teachers, the less the teachers commented on difficulties that plagued them from their higher learning experiences. The teachers with low efficacy appeared to have more difficulties with their training. The medium group contained much of the same difficulties but also had positive experiences as well. The high efficacy group had little difficulties and had more positive experiences from the field work, student teaching and in their own classrooms. The more the efficacy increases, the more competent the teachers became.

*Data on Student Teaching Experience.* Two of the interview questions from research question 3 were used to give a more detailed account of the experiences the

teachers had in the classroom to inform the responses to the more open ended questions.

The information from these questions can be found in Table 8. These questions are:

- e. In what grade did you do your student teaching?
- f. What is the make-up of the classroom's diverse needs?

*Table 10 Qualitative Question Number 3 e and f*

Participant	Grade	Classroom diversity
Ann	2 <sup>nd</sup> , K	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD
Abby	3 <sup>rd</sup>	n/a
Ashley	1 <sup>st</sup>	Cognitive disabilities
Angela	K	Physical disability (Cerebral palsy) and cognitive disabilities
Betty	K, 1 <sup>st</sup> , and 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD, Autism
Brittany	PreK, K, 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Physical disabilities (Cerebral Palsy, stroke, Spina Bifida), Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD, Emotional disabilities, Behavioral disabilities, and hearing disability (child wore hearing aid), Autism
Brenda	2 <sup>nd</sup> , PreK, K	Cognitive disabilities, ADHD, ADD, Autism, Physical disabilities (Cerebral Palsy), Behavioral disability, Emotional Disability
Becky	1 <sup>st</sup> , PreK, 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup>	ADHD, ADD, Autism, Cognitive disabilities, behavioral disabilities
Carol	1 <sup>st</sup> , PreK, 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Cognitive disabilities, ADHD, ADD, Autism
Cara	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup>	Cognitive disabilities, ADHD, ADD, Autism, Asperger's

*(table continues)*

Participant	Grade	Classroom diversity
Carly	PreK, 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Cognitive disabilities, ADHD, ADD, possibly MH
Chloe	1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Cognitive disabilities, ADHD, ADD, Spina Bifida

*Support from cooperating teacher during student teaching experience.* The last interview question for this research question was (g) what support did you receive from your cooperating teacher in working with diverse learners? This question lead to the following themes: control issues, nonchalance, and encouragement.

*Theme: Control issues.* Two of the cooperating teachers felt working with children with disabilities was not their responsibility and did not permit the student teachers to do so. Brittany's cooperating teacher would not permit her to work with the children with diverse needs. The cooperative teacher felt that it was not her responsibility to work with the students with diverse needs and so Brittany should not either. The cooperating teacher believed that is was the responsibility of the intervention specialist to work with the diverse learners. These students were pulled out of class for their instruction. Brittany wanted to work with all of the students but had to follow the instructions of the cooperating teacher so that she could finish her student teaching placement. The university supervisor did not agree with the cooperating teacher's perception of the teaching situation but told Brittany to follow what the cooperating teacher said since it was her classroom. She did not override the decision as she could have. Brittany learned that it was "not only the responsibility of the intervention specialist

to work with the children with special needs.” She believed that she should have been able to work with all of the students regardless of her cooperating teacher’s beliefs.

Abby did not have any support and she felt she did not need it since she was in a class that had the same situation as Brittany’s. Although Abby was allowed to work with all of the students, she believed it was her right, as her cooperating teacher also believed, to only work with typically developing students since they were not special education teachers. They believed that it was the responsibility of the intervention specialist to work with the diverse learners. Abby stated, “This is not what I expected when I decided to teach young children. I am an early childhood teacher, not a special education teacher. I am to teach typical children. I did not become a special education teacher for a reason.”

*Theme: Nonchalance.* The feeling of nonchalance on the part of cooperating teachers was evidenced when five of the teachers responded to the question about how much support they received from their cooperating teacher. Nonchalance can be categorized by lack of support or encouragement. The cooperating teachers believed that they were there to help if needed but did not offer additional support beyond what they thought was necessary, or what was directly requested by the student teachers.

Chloe’s cooperating teacher believed that Chloe did not need any extra support. She was there if Chloe needed her but if she did not, and then she did not provide it. Chloe had a high level of special education training as well as high efficacy. Her cooperating teacher was encouraging when asked but did not give out advice unless it was specifically asked by Carly. Carly’s questioning was the only way that she heard feedback from her cooperating teacher. Even though she gave Carly a lot of support, it

was not something she gave freely. Carly learned how to probe her cooperating teacher for the feedback that she needed about her teaching.

Ann believed that she had no support from her cooperating teacher. She stated that, her cooperating teacher believed that since she was doing student teaching, she would have to “sink or swim on her own.” “This was the situation that she (the cooperating teacher) had when she was student teaching, and if it was good enough for her, it would work for me,” Ann said. Ann’s university supervisor told her to do as she was told. Nonchalance by both the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor were a challenge for Ann. These were not effective ways to assist and support the student teacher.

Two of the participants, Angela and Betty, had the experience of a medium level of support from their cooperating teacher. Angela had low training in special education, and Betty had high training in special education. Even though they had differing levels of special education training, without full support from the cooperating teacher the student teachers felt as though they were not successful regarding their work in the classroom. It affected their confidence level and they doubted themselves as to whether what they were doing was correct or not. Angela stated, “The teachers were there if I need them but I was told that I was to try to do it on my own if I could.” Betty felt that the reason that she only received a medium level of support was because she did not require it since she “was not very needy.”

*Theme: Encouragement.* For this theme, eight of the twelve participants believed that they received a lot of support and encouragement from their cooperating teachers in terms of working with children with disabilities.

Even though Brittany's cooperating teacher did not believe that it was her responsibility to teach children with diverse needs, she did support Brittany in her teaching in the classroom. She gave her daily, encouraging feedback. Ashley, Brenda, Carly, and Chloe had the same experience with encouraging feedback. Ashley's teacher helped her with "so much-with everything." Becky's cooperating teacher wanted her to be successful and gave her a lot of support in the classroom. Cara's teachers were "helpful and this is the experience that helped her learn how important it is to create a community of learners." Chloe's teacher gave her good advice. Chloe was told to, "always keep an open mind and teach them all with love and positive thoughts." Her cooperating teacher also told her, "to never listen to what the other teachers tell you about the students in your class." Chloe found her support to help her so much when she was student teaching. Carol stated that her cooperative teacher had the best behaved students in the school. She never raised her voice and the children always knew what to do. She was so calm and nurturing with the students. It was a wonderful place to be. I want to be just like her. Carol believed that the support of her cooperating teacher really helped her in the classroom.

*Differences in perceptions of cooperating teachers among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy.* Encouragement can lead to positive feelings of self-worth. Positive feeling of self-worth can help the first year early childhood teacher feel

good about herself as well as feeling good about what she is doing. It is this act that helps to strengthen the efficacy of student teachers and first year teachers. When looking at this theme, two of the teachers are from the medium efficacy group, and all four of the teachers from the high efficacy group can be found here. There was only one teacher with low efficacy mentioned in this theme.

The group of teachers with low efficacy who had minimal support believed that the lack of support made the student teaching experience more difficult and stressful than necessary (Ann and Angela). Ann's cooperating teacher went out of her way to not support her in any way since she had a bad experience as a student teacher. She believed that she would treat Ann the way she had been treated. Ann wondered "how can anyone possibly expect one person to be able to handle all of the different levels of learning in the classroom?" The feeling of being overwhelmed was evident with this group of teachers such as the way Angela was treated in her classroom. Angela was told to "try to do it on her own if she could." Ashley received a lot of support from her teacher and had a good experience. Abby received no support as she felt she did not need any since she did not work with diverse learners.

One member of the medium efficacy group also had the feeling of being overwhelmed at times. Betty believed that she was "not able to meet the many differing needs of the children" in her classroom. Betty was the only one from this group with a medium level of support. Brittany, Brenda, and Becky received a high level of support and they felt as though the encouragement was helpful. They attributed their success in the classroom to the support of their cooperating teachers.

The high efficacy group had all four members receive full support in their student teaching placements. They had positive learning experiences and enjoyed working with the children with diverse needs. They also did not comment on any negative aspects of student teaching. It was deemed successful by all.

*Summary of themes.* The field and student teaching experiences along with the level of support from cooperating teachers can make a difference to the student teacher. If the student teacher has a supportive cooperating teacher, the student teacher is more likely to have a successful experience even if the student teacher has low to medium efficacy, as in the case of Ashley. Ashley had low efficacy and was still able to have a successful student teaching experience due to the level of support she received throughout student teaching. This experience helped to build Ashley's level of efficacy, to gain confidence and self esteem. It is possible that more experiences of this nature would help her change her level of efficacy.

The teachers with fully supportive cooperating teachers and also with high levels of efficacy had very successful experiences that helped to build their self-esteem and confidence level for working with children with disabilities. These teachers had positive field experiences and continued success in the classroom during their first year of teaching.

Research question 3 asked what role higher education plays in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach. The information gleaned from the teachers and the themes shows that higher education plays an important role in preparing the teachers to work with students with diverse needs. The absence of

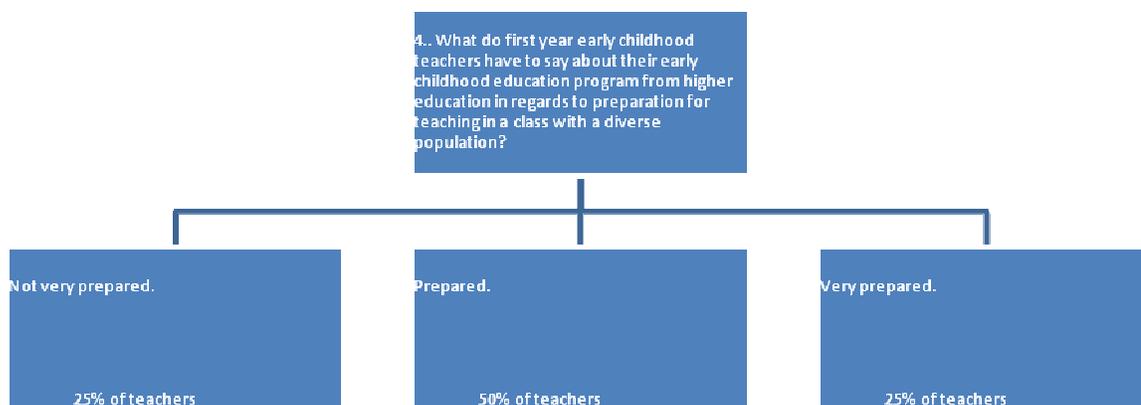
references to preparation gave insight. These teachers had the proper support from their cooperating teachers for working in an inclusive classroom. These same teachers also were able to successfully work in their own classrooms upon graduation.

Overall, the teachers with little to medium support from their cooperating teachers and had either low or medium levels of efficacy had mixed results from their student teaching. Those with medium level of efficacy had more success in the classroom than the teachers with low efficacy. This assumption is not set in stone as there are a few teachers from each group that make this statement not be correct a 100% of the time, but it does hold true for at least 80% of the time. Efficacy and preparation play a big factor in the success of the student teacher.

*Research Question 4.* What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?

The second question addressed the issue of what the first year early childhood teachers had to say about their higher education preparation for teaching in a class with diverse needs. In order to answer this question, teachers were asked about their preparation level. The first question addressed the issue of higher education and its role in preparing early childhood teachers for working with diverse populations. In order to answer this question, teachers were asked about their experiences in higher education. To put the information together, it was found that the answers fell into three categories. The breakdown was found that 25% of the teachers interviewed felt that they did not feel very prepared at all, 50% felt prepared enough for their first classroom and 25% felt very

prepared by their university or college to teach in their class with diverse needs (Figure 5).



*Figure 5.* Teacher Preparation in Higher Education Prior to Teaching

The answers from two of the interview questions were pooled to create a similar theme. Interview questions A and E were combined as they pertained to field experience.

- a. How well do you feel that your university fully prepared you to teach in an inclusive classroom?
- e. How adequate was the special education training you received from your university now that you are working in your own classroom?

The information gleaned from the participants yielded six themes for these two interview questions: on the job training; field experience and university preparation; paperwork and

teacher workload; feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed; confidence; and medical issues.

*Theme: On the job training.* When asked how many of the participants felt that their university fully prepared them to teach in an inclusive classroom and how adequate the special education training was that they received from their university now that they have worked in their own classroom, nine out of the twelve participants stated that they would have liked to have had more preparation and training. Even though Carly felt that she was well prepared, she stated that “everybody could use more training.”

As this theme emerged, it was noted that Carol stated that she did not know how to do many of the day-to-day things that teachers are required to complete such as lunch count, attendance, completing book orders, how to schedule a field trip, or how to complete the forms for the school district to get approval for the field trips. The simple things that she should have been taught, she was at a loss for. She did have the experience in her classroom while student teaching to complete lunch count and attendance but it was completed on paper. Once she was hired by her school district, she was not given any training during the new teacher workshop as to how to complete the lunch count and attendance since it was electronic. She felt that she should have learned practical information through her training from the school district. All of this additional information that she did not know helped to frustrate her and impede her time away from teaching. The frustration level of the teachers over administrative details had a significant impact on their ability to be effective in the classroom.

A theme within this theme was the lack of training the new teachers had when they were hired by their school districts. As Carol stated above, Ann also did not know how to fill out the paperwork for her school district. Becky believed that she too had to learn much of what was necessary for a first year teacher on her own. The new teacher orientation and faculty development was not as effective or informative as they new teachers needed to feel successful. This also caused them to lose time in teaching their students. As stated above, the frustration level of the teachers over administrative details had a significant impact on their ability to be effective in the classroom.

Betty and Brenda felt somewhat prepared but felt as though they could have had more training from their school district and from their university about what was needed to be prepared as a first year teacher. They had to learn much of what they needed to do through on the job training. Becky and Ann believed that her training was too broad and she needed to have more specific skills when working with her students and their needs. She also stated that she had a lot of on the job training her first year. Carol also believed that she needed more real world learning since she did not know how to do scheduling. She was required to complete her own schedule and was only given the information as to when her specials were (such as gym, art, music, and library) and she was to create her own schedule around these classes. She did not know how to complete this task and was not given very much direction by any of her coworkers, administration, or by her school district. Brittany had difficulty trying to coordinate the class schedule with all of the students' schedules. She felt as though the school district should have provided more assistance in managing all of the different needs of the students.

*Theme: Field experience and university preparation.* When asked about how the first year teachers felt about their training from their university and did it fully prepare them to teach in an inclusive classroom and how adequate was the special education training they received from their university now that you taught in your own classroom six of the teachers (Ashley, Ann, Abby, Betty, Brenda, and Carol) stated that they did not believe that they were adequately prepared to teach in the inclusive classroom and that their university did not give them enough special education training. Abby stated that she was “not prepared at all and it does not matter since she will not have to ever work with them.” Ann and Ashley each only had one special education class during their undergraduate training and believed that they did not have enough special education training. Ashley had two special education courses and still did not feel “as though she had enough training” once she got in her own classroom. She stated that she “went to outside resources, her aunt who is a special education teacher” to answer her questions. Chloe and Angela also had to do research, but for different reasons. Chloe conducted research so that she was completely prepared to meet all of the needs of her students. Angela “had to do a lot of research on her own since she did not pay very close attention in school.” Betty, who had felt somewhat prepared, believed that she could have used more training. She is a strong believer that “early childhood teachers need more special education training.”

Carol stated that her university did not explain “the connection of the theory with practice in the classroom” and she found it hard to make that connection on her own. She did have good experiences in the classroom and liked her special education training.

Becky faulted her lack of training to bad field experience placements during her undergraduate years.

Two of the teachers felt that their training was fine (Becky and Carol) and four of the teachers felt prepared from their field experience and their training in special education (Brenda, Cara, Carly, and Chloe). Brenda said, “They gave me experience, and theory and it was up to me to do the rest. I did a good job in the classroom teaching but I was not the best student.” Brittany did not agree with the others about her training. Brittany stated, “They did a good job. I was somewhat prepared but I am sure that I could have always have learned more. I can’t believe that I had graduated from school and never saw what an IEP looks like. ” Becky and Carol thought that they could have used more training but felt that their university did a good job. Becky stated, “I was okay. I would have liked more training but I had enough. I was a good student. I was book smart and experience poor. Compared to my colleagues, I did not have the same field experiences that they did. They had better placements. That was the fault of my university.” Cara and Brittany felt “well prepared.” When asked about how fully prepared Cara felt she replied, “To a great extent. I was ready for my own classroom.” Chloe felt well prepared as well and added that she” has a natural instinct” in the classroom. The teachers with high levels of efficacy had a better view of their university training than the teachers with the low efficacy. None of the teachers with low efficacy commented that they had positive feelings about their preparation from their university to teach in an inclusive classroom.

*Theme; Paperwork and teacher workload.* The next theme to emerge came from the question asked about what difficulties they have adapting to the diverse needs of their students initially. Five of the teachers (Ashley, Ann, Angela, Carol, and Chloe) stated that the paperwork was excessive and that they did not know how to complete it. Ashley stated that “there was too much to do and no inservicing from the school district” to know how to complete it. Ann “did not know how to complete the paperwork.” Angela said, “There is too much to do and not enough time to complete it all.” Carol and Chloe echoed the same. None of the teachers who fell into the medium efficacy group had issues with this theme.

*Theme: feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed.* The teachers were asked about their initial feelings when they started working with diverse learners while at the university or in the classroom and how they feel about working with them now. Four of the teachers (Ann, Ashley, Becky, and Brenda) responded that they were “scared to death” at first. Becky stated that she was “scared and excited at the same time.” Ann believed that although she was “scared at first, it got better as the experience progressed. She is fine with it now.” Angela was “overwhelmed at first, and is less overwhelmed now.” She was overwhelmed by most of it. Ashley “did not know what to do at first and found it to be a great learning experience. There was too much to do with standards, curriculum, IEPs and outside testing. It caused me a lot of stress.” Much like Ashley, Abby felt that there is too much testing going on in the classroom as required by their state and local school districts. Ann had “difficulty adapting to the different needs in the classroom.” Ann, Angela, and Ashley all stated that they thought they were prepared for

the diverse needs of the students until they got in their own classroom upon graduation and found that they did not really know all that they needed to know. Betty did not know what to do at first. The teachers with high efficacy had a different reaction to the questions. Cara was “worried at first because the students had so many needs- it was overwhelming. Could I help all of them? I decided that I could.”

*Theme: Confidence.* There was only one teacher from the low efficacy group to respond in the affirmative about these same two questions about their feelings about working with diverse needs initially and currently. Ann “loves working with them.” Cara and Chloe both responded that they “love every minute of it.” Brittany stated that “every day is a new experience with them and she loves it.” Carly finds it “challenging but loves what she does.” Chloe was very excited to work with the students with diverse needs and each day is new. Carol was “thrilled to work with the students with diverse needs.” Brenda enjoys having the students in her class since “everyday is a new experience.” The group of teachers with high efficacy had a better transition into the classroom from the very beginning of their field experiences and into their own classrooms.

There were also teachers with a lack of confidence. Ann stated that “she was having difficulty adapting to the many needs within the classroom and was not feeling very confident in what was being done in the classroom.” Abby believed that she “did not have to work in a class with diverse needs since” she “was an early childhood teacher – not a special education teacher.” She also stated that this does not have anything to do with her. She said she is not sure that she is “cut out for this.” This is not what she expected when she decided to teach young children. Betty wished that there was “more

emphasis on inclusive education but that she was okay.” The teachers from the high efficacy group had more confidence than the group of teachers with low efficacy.

*Theme: Medical issues.* When the teachers were asked about how they felt about working with students with diverse needs now, two of the teachers (Ann and Betty) remarked that they are uncomfortable with students who have medical issues. The teachers believed that they are not trained properly to deal with the medically fragile students. In all of their training in early childhood education they never had any experience with medically fragile students. They were uncomfortable with the fact that they are not nurses and that they were afraid that they would do something to harm the student instead of help them. The thought of a student with a feeding tube or a breathing tube was scary to them. If the students had an aid, it was less frightening, but the both felt that medical issues should be left to people who are trained professionally to work with such students. Betty did state that she is “gaining confidence day by day.”

*Differences in perceptions of teacher preparation among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy.* The teachers with low efficacy believed that they did not have enough training especially in the area of special education. Ann believed that she “was prepared” until she “got into her own classroom and found out (that she was not prepared at all).” She wished that she “had learned more about the various needs.” Abby was “not happy to work with students with special needs. “ She was “glad that she was lucky enough not to get any.” She also believed that she did not have any special education training at all. Ashley stated that she “only had one course of special education.” Angela thought that she had enough special education training when she was

in college but now believes the university did not prepared her as much as she wished they had now that she is in her classroom. When she got her first teaching job she found out just how much she does not know about teaching in an inclusive classroom and working with students with diverse needs.

The teachers from the medium efficacy group were split in half with two of them believing that they needed more special education training and two of them believing that they were adequately prepared. Betty wished that there was “more emphasis on inclusive education in her training.” Brenda also felt as though she “would have liked to have had more training in inclusive education.” Becky stated that she “would have liked more (training in inclusive education) but had enough.” Brittany believed that she had enough training but “could always have learned more (about the inclusive classroom).” This group, even though they had mixed replies, still did not believe that their training was exactly what they needed for the inclusive classroom to work with students with diverse needs.

It was the group of teachers with high efficacy that felt as though they were well prepared for the classroom of students with diverse needs and had the feeling that they were well prepared from their university. Carol stated that “they prepared me well.” Cara believed that the university prepared her “to a great extent” and she was ready for her own classroom. Carly also believed that she was “completely prepared.” Lastly, Chloe was “fully prepared.” Three of the teachers from the high efficacy group also had high special education training. The exception of this group was Carly who had low special

education training who believes that she has a natural instinct with children so she is able to fill in the missing information that she had not been taught about special education.

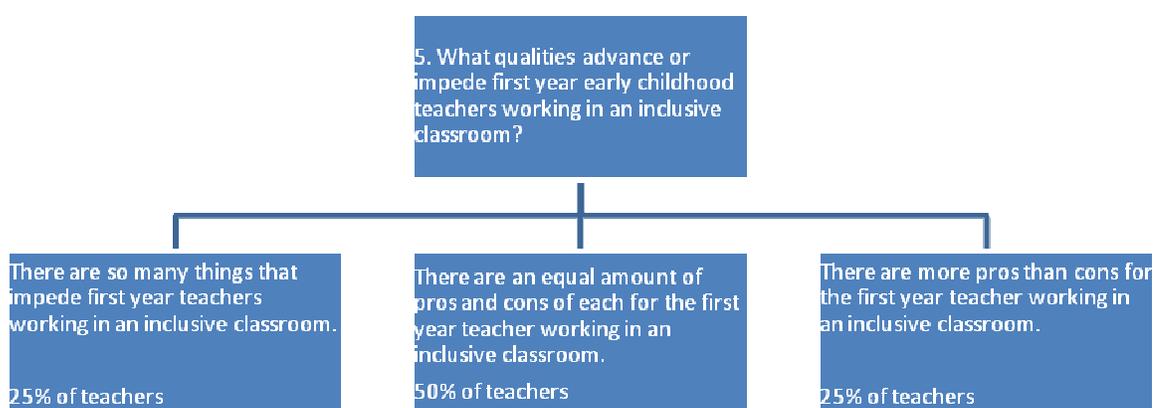
Research question 4 asked what first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population. The teachers fell into the three groups of not feeling prepared by their university, feeling adequately prepared, and being fully prepared by their university.

*Summary of themes.* The level of preparation that the teachers received is directly proportionate to their level of efficacy. The teachers who were not well prepared also had low efficacy. The teachers who believed that they had adequate preparation, had medium efficacy; and the teachers who were of the opinion that they were fully prepared, had high efficacy.

*Research Question 5.* What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?

In order to discover what the teachers felt about this question, teachers were asked about their experiences in the inclusive classroom. This was a more difficult section to find themes. This question yielded three categories of teachers: those that felt there were more cons than pros that impede teachers, those that felt there were fairly equal pros and cons that impede teachers, and those that felt there were more pros than cons that impede teachers. It was found that 25% felt that there were more things that can impede a first year early childhood teacher than things that can advance them in the classroom. The second group of teachers felt that there is an equal amount of things that can both impede

and advance first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom (50%). The last group of teachers replied that there are more things that advance early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom than things that impede them (25%) (Figure 6).



*Figure 6.* Results of Research Question 5

Several of the questions asked of the teachers were to identify further background information about their classroom. The answers to these eight questions can be found in table 10.

1. What types of diverse needs are addressed among the children that you teach in your classroom?
2. What kind of support do you receive from support staff? What kind of support staff (aide, paraprofessional, intervention specialist, etc.)?
3. Is there an intervention specialist assigned to help you with your class?

4. What kind of assistance did you receive from an intervention specialist?
5. How many students are on a 504 plan?
6. How many students have identified needs and are on IEPs?
7. How many students have unidentified needs?
8. What is your class size?

Table 11 *Background information for research question 5*

Participant	Diverse needs(b)	Support staff (e)	Intervention specialist (f)	Students on 504 plan (g)	Students on IEPs (h)	Students with unidentified needs (i)	Class size (j)
Ann	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD	Paraprofessional, aide	Yes	0	4	2	20
Abby	None		Yes	0	5	0	20
Ashley	Cognitive-developmentally delayed	None	Yes	0	4	2	22
Angela	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD, Autism, Asperger's		Yes	0	7	1	22
Betty	Physical and cognitive needs	Aide	Yes	0	6	1	19
Brittany	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD, Autism		Yes	0	4	2	20
Brenda	LD, ADD, ADHD, possible spectrum disorder	Aide	Yes	0	5	1	21
Becky	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD	Aide	Yes	0	4	4	19

*(table continues)*

Participant	Diverse needs(b)	Support staff (e)	Intervention specialist (f)	Students on 504 plan (g)	Students on IEPs (h)	Students with unidentified needs (i)	Class size (j)
Cara	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD, Autism, Asperger's	Aide	Yes	0	8	4	22
Carly	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD, possibly MH	Aide	Yes	0	8	4	19
Chloe	Cognitive disabilities, ADD, ADHD, spina bifida		Yes	0	6	3	25

Three additional interview questions were asked of the teachers that yielded eight themes: confidence building, teaching is a rewarding experience, organization and scheduling, differentiating strategies, autonomy for students, observation, overwhelmed by amount of work, and lack of planning time.

- a. How do you feel about working with children with diverse needs now?
- c. What did you do to make it easier to adapt to working with diverse learners?
- d. What difficulties did you have adapting to the diverse needs of your students?

The answers from two of the interview questions were pooled as to create a similar theme. Interview questions k and l were combined as they pertained to obstacles

working in an inclusive classroom. Additional information about successes and frustrations were also addressed within these two questions. These two questions yielded eight themes: Classroom as a community, lack of common planning time, professional development, self-esteem issues, lack of common planning time, too few hours in a day, lack of support by the school, and lack of support by the parents.

k. What has been your biggest obstacle with working in an inclusive classroom?

l. Is there anything further that you would like to share about working in your inclusive classroom? Suggestions and/or frustrations?

Themes related to the qualities that advance first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom:

*Theme: Confidence building.* Five of the first year teachers felt that working with their diverse needs students was a confidence building experience, and that this increase in confidence advanced their ability to work with diverse learners. Ann felt “better now with experience.” Betty stated that she “felt better as the year goes by.” Ashley and Angela stated that they both felt so much better as the year continued and Brittany believed that she was “getting better day by day.” Brenda was the most enthusiastic of the group and stated that she was “very happy” with her progress and was “pulling it all together.” Of the group, Angela believed that she “felt a little bit better but still had much to learn even after a year.” Abby stated that “she still did not work with diverse learners.”

All of the teachers from the low efficacy group and three out of four teachers from the medium efficacy group felt strongly that their growth as a teacher of children with diverse needs increased as their confidence grew. They also do not feel completely

confident as of yet in their role as a teacher of diverse learners. All of the teachers from the high efficacy group had confidence in their teaching ability from the very beginning.

*Theme: Rewarding Experience.* Five of the first year early childhood teachers believed that working with students with diverse needs was a rewarding experience. Becky “loves every minute of it and wishes” she “had been able to work with them all along.” She had not had much experience working with students with diverse needs before her first teaching job. Cara also “loves it.” and Carol believes that “it is so rewarding.” Carly stated that “it can be challenging but loves it.” Chloe believes that “it is the best experience and can’t wait to go to work each day.” Each of these teachers speaks positively about their experiences as a first year early childhood teacher.

Along with the feeling that their jobs were rewarding, these teachers also had the feelings of confidence and enthusiasm. These teachers, who fell into the medium efficacy and high efficacy groups, had a real zest for teaching and their enthusiasm was evident through their voices while being interviewed over the phone. Their higher level of efficacy also helped them feel more successful in the classroom since they had a more positive view of themselves as teachers.

*Theme: Differentiating Strategies.* Ann used many different strategies when she taught her students with diverse needs. This way she was reaching them in the way that they need to be taught. Ann had a paraprofessional and an aide in her classroom daily and an intervention specialist came a few days a month to help her teach. Angie still had not made up her mind about which strategies to use since she “tried out different strategies each week to see which ones work and which ones don’t.” This way she was able to zero

in on the successful strategies. She had the intervention specialist come to team teach with her a few times a week. Carly taught using “multiple intelligences and used a variety of teaching strategies to make the day interesting and to teach each student the way that he should be taught according to his modality.” Carly had an aide and the intervention specialist to help her teach her students. Cara felt as though “all of her students have needs so she does not have to do any adapting to work with them.” She taught “using different modalities every day so she can reach all of her students.” Cara had an aide and the intervention specialist to help her when she taught so they all were able to work individually with the children.

The teachers with more support used differing types of instruction to teach their students and were able to meet their students’ needs even though they had many students with identified and unidentified needs in their classrooms. Each teacher had at least six identified students on IEPs in their classes. Two of these teachers came from the low efficacy group and the other two teachers came from the high efficacy group.

*Theme: Autonomy for students.* Four of the teachers believed that the students should be able to move around the room as necessary. Becky believed that this “makes all of the children comfortable.” When the students were comfortable they would be able to relax and can learn more. Carol gave all of the “children the freedom to sit where they liked and let them move around as needed.” This helped the students with ADD and ADHD. This lessened the students’ fidgeting and helped them pay attention more since they could move around. Cara believed that her students should be able to move as needed, as well. Chloe “learned many transitions and had the students move around a lot

so that they were not sitting at their desks for too long.” This type of positive attitude is really best practice for any early childhood classroom and especially for a classroom that includes students with diverse needs.

Three of the four teachers who believed that this was an important aspect in teaching the students with diverse needs fell into the high efficacy group while Becky fell into the medium efficacy group.

*Theme: Observation.* Two of the teachers were not sure how to make adaptations for their students so they asked to do observations in other teachers’ classrooms to see how the teachers handle different students’ needs. Brenda stated that going to “observe in another teacher’s class to see how she worked with her students helped her a lot.” Brittany also liked to “talk to other teachers and see what they do.” Both of these teachers felt it was beneficial for them to observe a master teacher to help them develop their own teaching style. This was also best practice for the teachers to see what is successful in the classroom and to try to incorporate the successes into their teaching style. Brenda and Brittany both had medium levels of efficacy. This experience helped them to gain understanding and improve their abilities as teachers.

*Theme: Organization and scheduling.* Ashley found it difficult to teach if she did “not keep a schedule.” This was her best way to adapt to working with diverse needs. Ashley did not have an aide and she believed that if she “had some help with the students, she would feel better about what she is doing.” She wondered “why can’t I have help? The intervention specialist is really spread thin and she is supposed to be in my room for a few hours each week but she always has some kind of crisis that she needs to attend to.

I am lucky if she helps out four hours a month.” One other teacher believed that keeping on a schedule and being organized was very important, too. Betty felt that being organized was important so she “kept all of her students’ IEP goals for the day on a clipboard” so that she can “check them off” as she taught. “Making a schedule and sticking to it helps so much. It helped me know what I need to do.” said Betty. Betty has an aide that helped her in her classroom each day.

Not all teachers felt that sticking to a schedule was important. Several of them believed that the students should be able to have their day changed around as needed. Cara teaches in “organized chaos” and Carly stated that she “mixed things up throughout the day to make the day more interesting for the students.” The belief to have a strict schedule or not to have a strict schedule is something that must come from the teacher and fit her personality. Each teacher had their own level of tolerance for the tightness of the schedule. It also depended on the school system that the teacher teaches in. If the teacher teaches in a self contained classroom, she can choose to teach what she wants to teach, when she wants to teach it, but if the teacher had other teachers who teach the students, then the teacher must follow the school schedule.

*Theme: Classroom as a community.* This was a topic that was mentioned when the teachers wanted to share successes within their classroom. One teacher from each efficacy group stated that it was necessary for the classroom to be a community of learners. Ashley believed that this was a very important aspect of her teaching. Brenda believed that by creating a classroom community it “makes the students feel safe.” Carly stated that by creating a community, they are like a family where “everyone is accepted

in the classroom regardless of race, ethnicity, or learning abilities. They are accepting of all people.” The idea of acceptance was thread throughout what these three teachers discussed when asked about the pros of teaching in an inclusive classroom. The fact that all students are accepted made the learning environment a positive and encouraging place to be.

*Theme: Professional Development.* Another theme that was considered to be a pro working in the inclusive classroom is the ability to go to conferences and other professional development experiences to help the teachers better themselves. Angela was very pleased with her school district since they approved her to go to workshops and conferences. She stated that “they are a great way for me to help to improve my teaching skills.” Brenda believed the same about her ability to go to workshops of her choice to improve her teaching skills. With budgetary cuts, not all schools are able to send teachers to workshops unless they pay for them themselves. Angela and Brenda were fortunate that their school districts had money set aside for new teachers for such professional development.

Qualities that impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom:

*Theme: Overwhelmed by the amount of work.* Teaching is a lot of work. This is not a new concept but half of the teachers were overwhelmed by the amount of work that was expected of them as first year teachers. Ann stated that “finding the time to do everything that was expected was her biggest hurdle.” She also found that she had difficulties “handling all of the different levels of learning in one classroom. How could

one person be expected to do that?” As the year progressed she did get into a routine. Ashley also found it daunting to “find time to do the standards, the IEP goals, and of the extra individualized planning.” She did not know what to do for all of them. She stated that there were too many differing levels of ability in her class-and felt as though she was teaching in a one room school house.” Betty “had a hard time getting everything done.” Angela agreed that there was way too much paperwork to complete and that “it never ends.” Brittany believed that there was “too much to do with all of the needs. There was just “too much testing.” Abby stated that “this is not what I expected when I decided to teach young children. “ She stated that she was not too sure that “she was cut out for this.”

Four of these teachers fell into the low efficacy group and two were from the medium efficacy group. They all believed that all of this extra work made it more difficult for first year early childhood teachers and all of the extra work that was perceived by these teachers differed by school district so that there was no way to determine the differences between all of the varying levels of paperwork and lesson planning. None of the high efficacy teachers noted that there was too much work.

*Theme: Lack of planning time.* In any classroom, planning must take place for the teacher to be effective. Although it is common for teachers to have planning time built into their school day, many teachers are not given enough time to be able to plan properly. Brenda stated that she “had so much planning and no time to do it.” Becky had difficulty “finding time to meet with the other teachers for planning.” Cara was frustrated that “all of the planning time was being used up by meetings and she had to do

all of her planning at home.” Carly agreed that there was “too little planning time for the team.” All of these teachers came from different school districts and from different states.

*Theme: Self-esteem issues.* Chloe spoke of the rampant lack of self-esteem and confidence that her students have, especially her students with special needs. She discussed how supportive she is of everything that the students do. The inclusive classroom helps to build confidence in all of her students, regardless of their ability. She feels that having students with diverse backgrounds helps all of them learn about life.

*Theme: Lack of common planning time.* The teachers spoke of planning time and lack of it throughout the interviews but lack of common planning time was only discussed within these two questions. Betty stated that “there is no common planning time for us in our school to discuss what kinds of things we should teach that week.” Cara also agreed with what Betty said. Cara stated that “we have to email each other at night to see if the teachers are all on the same page. This is something that should be done during a school day- not during my time at home with my family.” Betty and Cara believed that they would benefit from a common planning time at least once a week. Many schools are going to this type off schedule so that all of the teachers can get together and plan daily or weekly. This lack of common planning time makes the day longer when the teachers already have papers to grade in the evenings along with family obligations. This situation definitely falls under the category of a con when working in an inclusive classroom.

*Theme: Too few hours in the day.* The teachers believed that they had so much work to do and not enough time to do it. One of the factors that took up so much time was paperwork. The teachers were not aware of the amount of paperwork that was involved in teaching, especially with keeping up with the students' IEPs. Ann stated that "there are not enough hours in the day. There is just so much paperwork for me to complete at the end of the day." Ann also said that she would "much rather spend my time trying to find ways to enhance my teaching but I cannot find the time to do it." Carol also felt the same way about the lack of time to get everything completed in a school day. She stated, "By the time I get through everything that is necessary in the curriculum, I do not have any time for working individually with students to help them." This theme encompassed several different types of difficulties for having far too few hours in a day and caused difficulties for the first year teachers.

*Theme: Lack of support from the school.* Several teachers alluded to difficulties about having a lack of support from the school. As stated before, the range of problems were from lack of support staff for their needs in teaching in an inclusive classroom, the intervention specialist who could not possibly help all of the teachers who needed help, to teachers who wanted and needed an aide or paraprofessional to assist in the classroom. Carol felt that she had a lot of difficulty with her school district and wished that she had more cooperation from the district. She felt that the school district did not feel her requests were worth listening to. She believed that some of her students would "benefit from speech and language therapy year round and the school district will not pay for it." She said that "by the time the students come back from summer break, they have another

month to get back what they lost over the break. This makes no sense. One step forward, three steps back. It's frustrating." The teachers were really frustrated when there were things that they deemed important and the teachers were dismissed by the administration and the district. This is obviously a con to teaching in an inclusive classroom.

*Theme: Lack of support by parents.* Parents can be a difficult obstacle when teaching. Students with ADD and ADHD were the ones affected the most by parents who were not consistent or failed to give their children their prescribed medication. Ashley and Brittany had trouble with "parents who do not give their children their medication before school" or not at all. Brittany stated that "at the end of the month, the mothers sell their kid's meds for cash on the streets for money." Carly also had difficulty with parents "not giving their children their medicine consistently and the students have such difficulty concentrating and learning." Parents also cause disruption in the education of their children by not coming to parent conferences, not returning telephone calls, or signing paperwork that is necessary for the students. "Some parents do not want to see that there is anything wrong with their child" said Carol. They will not sign the paperwork to have their children tested. Carol also became frustrated with the parent who will not help their children with homework, won't enforce homework being done, or even care that their child is in school. They do not come to conferences, either. Carol stated that "it seems to be the parents of the children with special needs that never come to conferences or help with homework." The lack of control over the children's lack of medication and their parents' lack of concern can cause a lot of added stress to the teachers' day. This is yet another con to teaching in an inclusive classroom.

*Differences in perceptions of what qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom based on their efficacy.* There appeared to be no set answers for any of the responses to the question. The answers ranged for each group: low, medium, and high efficacy for the qualities that advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom. The answers for this question were personal in nature based on the experience of each teacher interviewed. What bothered some teachers did not bother others. This question had no pattern and so it is difficult to find commonalities among the three levels of efficacy.

*Summary of themes.* Research question number five did not yield enough information or contain a set pattern used to determine results for each efficacy group. Each was based more on a personal basis than overall responses that would fit onto the different levels of efficacy. The information does not support the question either way.

### *Qualitative Results*

The participants who had little special education training also had low preparedness and low efficacy. The teachers who had a high level of special education training also had high efficacy and high preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. The teachers who had high efficacy and high levels of special education training really enjoyed their jobs.

There were no differences found in the middle groups that had a medium level of special education training, a medium level of efficacy and a medium level of preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. Some of the teachers with medium levels of efficacy and medium levels of special education training liked teaching but did

not like all of the paperwork involved with the students. They were uncomfortable with not knowing how to fill it out. They also wanted to have more assistance with the students such as an aide or more interaction with the intervention specialist. They liked their jobs but were unsure of their effectiveness as a teacher with so many children with diverse needs. Teacher A stated that she taught in an inclusive class even though she had only a moderate level of special education training. She stated that she was surprised by all of the different needs of the students. She said she really had to go and do some research so that she was able to know about each child's disability. Multiple sources from different methods were used for triangulation such as peer review and the interviews of the first year early childhood teachers.

Even though the three groups were collapsed into two groups for the quantitative research, it was believed that the three groups of low, medium, and high would yield more information from the 12 participants if the original design was kept for the qualitative research.

#### *Data Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Research*

The accuracy of the findings was triangulated to ensure the credibility of the study. Data triangulation is built into the data collection and analysis of the sequential study since the data is integrated at interpretation. Sequential triangulation lends itself to better understand a phenomenon or process that is changing as a result of the study. It is important for the information gained to have accuracy in the findings of the qualitative study. Peer review completed by a colleague with a PhD in education provided an

external check of the research to further question the researcher about the methods to keep the researcher honest about the data.

The credibility of both the qualitative and quantitative findings was checked by the use of triangulation. Triangulation was completed by using a variety of sources to collect data. These included surveys, interviews, and demographic information. These sources were cross checked to ensure credibility of the sources. To maintain quality and credibility in an actual research study, the researcher should have properly interpreted responses from the participants; recorded them accurately, included primary data along with all other data collected in final report, and written the results accurately (Key, 1997). The triangulation of data of the various sources along with investigators established credibility of the study (Creswell, 1998).

The information gained from the interview on teacher preparedness, and special education training was compared to the results of the quantitative questions on preparedness, efficacy, and level of special education. Various sources were used to ensure that these pieces of evidence support each other. An external audit completed by a colleague with a PhD in education examined both the process and the product of the study and assessed the accuracy by reviewing the data and data analysis. When the study was assessed, it was “checked to determine whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions were supported by the data” (Creswell, 1998, p. 203). The auditor was not connected to the study in any way.

The study was based on the overarching research question: Are first year early childhood teachers taught enough about special education and field experiences to be able

to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their classroom? The results of the quantitative research showed that there is no significant difference between the high and low levels of special education training on perceived preparedness. It was also found that there are no significant differences between the low and high groups of efficacy on perceived preparedness in the first year early childhood teachers.

Both the quantitative and qualitative results of the study had a large amount of the data fall in the middle. In the qualitative results, there was a difference between the high group and the low group. The teachers with high level of efficacy felt the most prepared in all areas of teaching and the teachers with low level of efficacy felt the least prepared for many of the aspects of teaching. However on the quantitative side because of the small total sample size and the very small size of the low and high efficacy groups the data was collapsed into two groups, low and high with the results that there were no significant differences between low and high efficacy on perceived preparedness.

The questions that centered on special education training also had a large number of responses fall into the middle category. On the qualitative side, there was a limited difference between the low and high levels of special education training. However on the quantitative side because of the small total sample size and the very small size of the low and high groups the data was collapsed into two groups, low and high special education training with the results that there were no significant differences between low and high special education training on perceived preparedness. The very small sample limited the

results for this study thus causing a discrepancy in the results between quantitative and qualitative.

The triangulation of the information from the quantitative and qualitative showed that the qualitative research did not support the conclusion of the null hypotheses of research question 1: There was no significant difference between low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. The quantitative research supported the null hypothesis of research question 2: There was no significant difference between low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom, whereas, the qualitative results demonstrated that there was a difference between the high and low special education training on perceived preparedness.

The in-depth interviews of the first year early childhood teachers gained more specific information about their efficacy and perceived preparedness than the numerical scale of the OSTES and the American Teacher Scale. The teachers with low efficacy believed that they did not have enough training especially in the area of special education. Ann believed that she “was prepared” until she “got into her own classroom and found out (that she was not prepared at all).” She wished that she “had learned more about the various needs.” Abby was “not happy to work with students with special needs.” She was “glad that she was lucky enough not to get any.” She also believed that she did not have any special education training at all. Ashley stated that she “only had one course of special education.” Angela thought that she had enough special education training when she was in college but now believes the university did not prepare her as

much as she wished they had now that she is in her classroom. When she got her first teaching job she found out just how much she does not know about teaching in an inclusive classroom and working with students with diverse needs.

The teachers from the low efficacy group had gaps from their higher education experience. These gaps included the understanding of what inclusive education is and having field experiences with no guidance or specific assignments to work with diverse learners. Abby believed that she had no experience working with students with diverse needs and would never have to work with them since she was an early childhood teacher. The only teacher from this group that stated that she had gained any personal growth in her field experiences or in her student teaching was Angela who had empathy for the parents involved in IEP meetings.

The teachers from the medium efficacy group were split in half with two of them believing that they needed more special education training and two of them believing that they were adequately prepared. Betty wished that there was “more emphasis on inclusive education in her training.” Brenda also felt as though she “would have liked to have had more training in inclusive education.” Becky stated that she “would have liked more (training in inclusive education) but had enough.” Brittany believed that she had enough training but “could always have learned more (about the inclusive classroom).” This group, even though they had mixed replies, still did not believe that their training was exactly what they needed for the inclusive classroom to work with students with diverse needs.

The medium efficacy also had gaps in their higher education experience. They too did not understand the difference between working with diverse learners and working in an inclusive classroom. They also had a lack of specific assignments to work with diverse learners. There was only one teacher who had stated that she had gained personal growth. Becky gained empathy for parents involved in IEP meetings. To this point, these results mirror those of the low efficacy group. Brenda learned more about her experiences from higher education in regards to classroom management. Betty lacked support from her school district administration and did not have enough interaction with the intervention specialist to learn from the experience. Brittany had a sense of empathy and worked with her students to create a community of learners. The teachers from the medium efficacy group showed that they had more experience than that of the low efficacy group.

It was the group of teachers with high efficacy that felt as though they were well prepared for the classroom of students with diverse needs and had the feeling that they were well prepared from their university. Carol stated that “they prepared me well.” Cara believed that the university prepared her “to a great extent” and she was ready for her own classroom. Carly also believed that she was “completely prepared.” Lastly, Chloe was “fully prepared.” Three of the teachers from the high efficacy group also had high special education training. The exception of this group was Carly who had low special education training who believes that she has a natural instinct with children so she is able to fill in the missing information that she had not been taught about special education.

The high efficacy group only had one teacher, Chloe, who stated that she did not have any experience with inclusive classrooms even though she had a high level of

special education training. Carol and Chloe learned how to teach with empathy and also to create a community of learners that supported all of the students in their classrooms. This group did not report on specific troubles in their training from their higher education experiences.

A pattern emerged in the findings. The higher the efficacy of the teachers, the less the teachers commented on difficulties that plagued them from their higher learning experiences. The teachers with low efficacy appeared to have more difficulties with their training. The medium group contained much of the same difficulties but also had positive experiences as well. The high efficacy group had little difficulties and had more positive experiences from the field work, student teaching and in their own classrooms. The more the efficacy increases, the more competent the teachers became. There were no discrepant cases found in the qualitative side of the research.

#### *Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data*

The null hypotheses of both quantitative research questions were accepted. The data analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. There was a discrepancy in the quantitative and qualitative results. The small sample size and the numerical scale of the survey limited the answers for the quantitative research. The qualitative results showed that there was a difference between the levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness. The teachers with high levels of efficacy also had high levels of perceived preparedness. In regard to the second research question, the data analysis showed that there were no significant differences between the low and high

levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. The very small sample size did not yield as much information as the interviews did in the qualitative research. The qualitative results showed that there was a difference between the levels of special education training on perceived preparedness. The teachers with high levels of special education training also had high levels of perceived preparedness.

The information gained from the interviews gleaned much more specific information about how the first year early childhood teachers felt about being able to teach in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. The qualitative information gave a more detailed description for answering the central question: How do first year early childhood teachers describe their learning experiences in special education and will their preservice training and field experiences enable them to make adaptations to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their inclusive classroom?

According to the qualitative results, the participants who had little special education training also had low preparedness and low efficacy. The teachers who had a high level of special education training also had high efficacy and high preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. The teachers who had high efficacy and high levels of special education training enjoyed their jobs. The higher the efficacy of the teachers, the less the teachers commented on difficulties that plagued them from their higher learning experiences. The teachers with low efficacy appeared to have more difficulties with their training. The medium group contained much of the same

difficulties but also had positive experiences as well. The high efficacy group had little difficulties and had more positive experiences from the field work, student teaching and in their own classrooms. The more the efficacy increases, the more competent the teachers became.

There were no differences found in the middle groups that had a medium level of special education training, a medium level of efficacy and a medium level of preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. Some of the teachers with medium levels of efficacy and medium levels of special education training liked teaching but did not like all of the paperwork involved with the students. They were uncomfortable with not knowing how to fill out the paperwork. They also wanted to have more assistance with the students such as an aide or more interaction with the intervention specialist. They liked their jobs but were unsure of their effectiveness as a teacher with so many children with diverse needs. Multiple sources from different methods were used for triangulation such as peer review and the interviews of the first year early childhood teachers.

Even though the three groups were collapsed into two groups for the quantitative research, it was believed that the three groups of low, medium, and high would yield more information from the 12 participants if the original design was kept for the qualitative research. The information gleaned from the interviews supported other quantitative research that teachers with high efficacy were more prepared for teaching in the diverse, special needs classroom (Romi & Leyser, 2006; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2004, 2000; Walbeck et al, 2003). It was also found that teachers with high levels of special education

training were more prepared for teaching in the diverse, special needs classroom. This was supported by the research conducted by Stanton and McCollum (2002), Landerholm et al (2004), and Gargiulo et al (1997).

### Summary

In this chapter, the quantitative results were obtained first, followed by the qualitative research results. Finally, the integration of the two research methods was discussed. This study utilized a quantitative nonequivalent post test only research design, using an independent *t* test. The OSTES scores were utilized to calculate the levels of teacher efficacy. Originally, anything above +1 SD was equated with high levels of teacher efficacy and below -1 SD was equated with low levels of teacher efficacy. The scores between -1 SD and +1 SD equaled medium or moderate levels of teacher efficacy. However, the efficacy groups needed to be collapsed into two groups low and high as the medium group was too large to get acceptable results. With a sample of only 28, it was decided to collapse the groups into 2 groups instead of 3. The mean was rounded off to 45 and the participants were divided into low and high groups with the low group including all of the scores between 24-44 (frequency = 12) and the high group including all the scores between 45-54 (frequency = 16). The results supported the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference between the low ( $M = 26.17, SD = 6.94$ ) and high ( $M = 30.38, SD = 7.74$ ) levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom,  $t(26) = -1.486; p = .149$  (two-tailed). This was considered a low effect ( $d = -.063$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis for research question 1

was accepted, there was no significant difference between low and high levels of efficacy.

Both the quantitative and qualitative results of the study had a large amount of the data fall in the middle. In the qualitative results, there was a difference between the high group and the low efficacy group on perceived preparedness. The teachers with high level of efficacy felt the most prepared in all areas of teaching and the teachers with low level of efficacy felt the least prepared for many of the aspects of teaching. However on the quantitative side because of the small total sample size and the very small size of the low and high efficacy groups the data was collapsed into two groups, low and high with the results that there were no significant differences between low and high efficacy on perceived preparedness.

The levels of special education undergraduate learning determined the total amount of special education training. The three questions about special education training were utilized to determine the level of training. Originally, the totals from the special education training were then divided into three categories: low, medium, and high levels of training. The groups were then collapsed into two groups low and high as the medium group was too large to get acceptable results. There were outlier scores that skewed the data so the scores were then split into 2 groups based on the median. The scores above the median of 2.5 were determined to be high special education training and the scores below the median of 2.5 were determined to be low special education training. The low group included all teachers with the scores between 1 and 2 (frequency = 14) and the high group including all the scores between 3-11 (frequency =14). There was no significant

difference between the low ( $M = 29.79$ ,  $SD = 7.91$ ) and high ( $M = 27.36$ ,  $SD = 7.31$ ) levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom,  $t(26) = .843$ ;  $p = .407$  (two-tailed). The effect size ( $d = 1.02$ ) was low. Therefore, the null hypothesis from research question 2 was accepted: There was no significant difference among low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

The questions that centered on special education training also had a large number of responses fall into the middle category. On the qualitative side, there was a limited difference between the low and high levels of special education training. However on the quantitative side because of the small total sample size and the very small size of the low and high groups the data was collapsed into two groups, low and high special education training with the results that there were no significant differences between low and high special education training on perceived preparedness. The very small sample limited the results for this study thus causing a discrepancy in the results between quantitative and qualitative.

The results of the qualitative aspect of the study support that there were limited differences among the highest and lowest level of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. The data from the interviews also showed differences between lowest and highest levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. As in all three questions, the biggest area of response fell in the medium level. The answers yielded the following data (Table 11):

Table 11 *Percentage results from interviews*

Question	Low	Medium	High
3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?	25% 3/12 participants	42% 5/12 participants	33% 4/12 participants
4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?	25% 3/12 participants	58% 7/12 participants	17% 2/12 participants
5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?	25% 3/12 participants	58% 7/12 participants	17% 2/12 participants

Due to the limited sample from the study, the small number really limited the quantitative results. The qualitative results gave the participants the opportunity to explain the answers to the research questions more fully. The interview gave a much richer view of what the first year early childhood believed their experiences and views about efficacy and special education were. They were also able to explain the answers more fully to answer the three other research questions to give the researcher a bigger picture of the experiences of the participants. The qualitative results showed that there

was a difference between the levels of special education training on perceived preparedness. The teachers with high levels of special education training also had high levels of perceived preparedness.

The information gained from the interviews gleaned much more specific information about how the first year early childhood teachers felt about being able to teach in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. The qualitative information gave a more detailed description for answering the central question: How do first year early childhood teachers describe their learning experiences in special education and will their preservice training and field experiences enable them to make adaptations to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their inclusive classroom?

According to the qualitative results, the participants who had little special education training also had low preparedness and low efficacy. The teachers who had a high level of special education training also had high efficacy and high preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. The teachers who had high efficacy and high levels of special education training really enjoyed their jobs. The higher the efficacy of the teachers, the less the teachers commented on difficulties that plagued them from their higher learning experiences. The teachers with low efficacy appeared to have more difficulties with their training. The medium group contained much of the same difficulties but also had positive experiences as well. The high efficacy group had little difficulties and had more positive experiences from the field work, student teaching and

in their own classrooms. The more the efficacy increases, the more competent the teachers became.

There were no differences found in the middle groups that had a medium level of special education training, a medium level of efficacy and a medium level of preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. Some of the teachers with medium levels of efficacy and medium levels of special education training liked teaching but did not like all of the paperwork involved with the students. They were uncomfortable with not knowing how to fill it out. They also wanted to have more assistance with the students such as an aide or more interaction with the intervention specialist. They liked their jobs but were unsure of their effectiveness as a teacher with so many children with diverse needs. Multiple sources from different methods were used for triangulation such as peer review and the interviews of the first year early childhood teachers.

Even though the three groups were collapsed into two groups for the quantitative research, it was believed that the three groups of low, medium, and high would yield more information from the 12 participants if the original design was kept for the qualitative research. The information gleaned from the interviews supported other quantitative research that teachers with high efficacy were more prepared for teaching in the diverse, special needs classroom (Romi & Leyser, 2006; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2004, 2000; Walbeck et al, 2003). It was also found that teachers with high levels of special education training were more prepared for teaching in the diverse, special needs classroom. This was supported by the research conducted by Stanton and McCollum (2002), Landerholm et al (2004), and Gargiulo et al (1997).

The triangulation of the information from the quantitative and qualitative support the null hypotheses of research question 1: There was no significant difference among low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. The research also supported the null hypothesis of research question 2: There was no significant difference among low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom. Multiple sources from different methods were used for triangulation.

*Integration of the research methods.* Even though the three groups were collapsed into two groups for the quantitative research, it was believed that the three groups of low, medium, and high would yield more information from the 12 participants if the original design was kept for the qualitative research.

According to the qualitative research, the teachers who believed that they had adequate preparation, had medium efficacy; and the teachers who were of the opinion that they were fully prepared, had high efficacy.

The teachers who had a high level of special education training also had high efficacy and high preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. Multiple sources from different methods were used for triangulation such as peer review and the interviews of the first year early childhood teachers along with the quantitative surveys.

The qualitative results gave the participants the opportunity to explain the answers to the research questions more fully. The interview gave a much richer view of what the first year early childhood believed their experiences and views about efficacy and special education were. They were also able to explain the answers more fully to answer the

three other research questions to give the researcher a bigger picture of the experiences of the participants. The small sample size hindered the results from the quantitative research as it did not yield a big enough sample to give a good representation of what first year early childhood teachers believe to be true. The interviews aided in filling in the blanks that the survey results left to give a fuller picture of each participant.

Chapter 5 will present the interpretation of the findings. It will also explain the implications of the findings both for practical purposes and for the need of social change for future educators. Recommendations for future research will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

With many schools beginning to use full inclusion instead of resource rooms for their students with disabilities, new teachers need to be trained to meet the many diverse needs of their students. The problem addressed in this study was the need to close the gap in research between 1990 and 2009. Limited information about early childhood first year teachers' efficacy and the training for accommodations for diverse student abilities in classrooms has been the topic of empirical studies. Many first year early childhood educators are not prepared to meet the diverse population of students' needs in their classrooms particularly related to the inclusive classroom. Some curricula from institutions of higher learning do not prepare them adequately for this task. Many first year early childhood teachers rely heavily on the intervention specialist for assistance. This problem has an impact on the teachers, the intervention specialists, and the students when the teacher does not have the proper background to teach the students using her own training. Many possible factors contribute to this problem, among which are ineffective college curriculum (Smith & Smith, 2000), limited preparation on the preservice teachers' academics (Chang et al., 2005; Clifford et al, 2005), lack of training in special education (Chang et al., 2005), limited to no service learning or field experience as an undergraduate (Smith & Smith, 2000). This study contributes to the body of knowledge by identifying the relationship between teacher efficacy in working with diverse learners during their first year of teaching and their preservice teacher preparation in that area, and by identifying the level of preparation needed for a first early

childhood educator to be successful teaching in an inclusive classroom with a diverse population.

The methodology of the study was that of mixed methods using the sequential explanatory strategy. The use of qualitative and quantitative methodology was combined to achieve the overall quality of the research. For the qualitative aspect phenomenological research which was used for this study was hermeneutic (Hatch, 2002).

The central question of this study was asked of the teachers and it was: How do first year early childhood teachers describe their learning experiences in special education and will their preservice training and field experiences enable them to make adaptations to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their inclusive classroom?

In order to answer this question, five overarching research questions were devised: two quantitative and three qualitative questions. The result of the data analysis of these five research questions follows:

1. What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?
2. What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?
3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?

4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?
5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?

Research Question 1: What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom? This study utilized a quantitative nonequivalent post test only research design, using an independent  $t$  test. A  $t$  test was utilized with the sample. There was no significant difference between the low ( $M = 26.17$ ,  $SD = 6.94$ ) and high ( $M = 30.38$ ,  $SD = 7.74$ ) levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom,  $t(26) = -1.486$ ;  $p = .149$  (two-tailed). This was considered a low effect ( $d = -.063$ ).

Therefore, the null hypothesis for research question 1 was not rejected, there was no significant difference between low and high levels of efficacy.

Research Question 2: What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom? There was no significant difference between the low ( $M = 29.79$ ,  $SD = 7.91$ ) and high ( $M = 27.36$ ,  $SD = 7.31$ ) levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom,  $t(26) = .843$ ;  $p = .407$  (two-tailed). The effect size ( $d = 1.02$ ) was low.

Therefore, the null hypothesis from research question 2 was not rejected: There was no significant difference among low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

The first qualitative research question was asked of the teachers and it was: What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach? In order to answer this question, teachers were asked about their experiences in higher education. It was found that 25% of the teachers had no experience with inclusive classrooms before beginning her first teaching job, 42% had minimal experience with inclusive classrooms, and 33% had extensive experience before beginning her first teaching job (Figure 4).

The first question addressed the issue of higher education and its role in preparing early childhood teachers for working with diverse populations. In order to answer this question, teachers were asked about their experiences in higher education. It was found that 25% of the teachers had no experience with inclusive classrooms before beginning her first teaching job, 42% had minimal experience with inclusive classrooms, and 33% had extensive experience before beginning her first teaching job (Figure 4).

The interview questions for this research question fell into two topics: field experiences and support by the cooperating teacher during student teaching. The information gleaned from the 12 participants yielded four themes for these four interview questions: gaps in higher education curriculum, personal growth, empathy, and lack of professional support from the school district.

*Differences among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy.* Upon compilation of the data from the interviews it was found that there were differences among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy. The teachers from the low efficacy group had gaps from their higher education experience. These gaps included the understanding of what inclusive education is and having field experiences with no guidance or specific assignments to work with diverse learners. Abby believed that she had no experience working with students with diverse needs and would never have to work with them since she was an early childhood teacher. The only teacher from this group that stated that she had gained any personal growth in her field experiences or in her student teaching was Angela who had empathy for the parents involved in IEP meetings.

The medium efficacy also had gaps in their higher education experience. They too did not understand the difference between working with diverse learners and working in an inclusive classroom. They also had a lack of specific assignments to work with diverse learners. There was only one teacher who had stated that she had gained personal growth. Becky gained empathy for parents involved in IEP meetings. To this point, these results mirror those of the low efficacy group. Brenda learned more about her experiences from higher education in regards to classroom management. Betty lacked support from her school district administration and did not have enough interaction with the intervention specialist to learn from the experience. Brittany had a sense of empathy and worked with her students to create a community of learners. The teachers from the medium efficacy group showed that they had more experience than that of the low efficacy group.

The high efficacy group only had one teacher, Chloe, who stated that she did not have any experience with inclusive classrooms even though she had a high level of special education training. Carol and Chloe learned how to teach with empathy and also to create a community of learners that supported all of the students in their classrooms. This group did not report on specific troubles in their training from their higher education experiences.

A pattern emerged in the findings. The higher the efficacy of the teachers, the less the teachers commented on difficulties that plagued them from their higher learning experiences. The teachers with low efficacy appeared to have more difficulties with their training. The medium group contained much of the same difficulties but also had positive experiences as well. The high efficacy group had little difficulties and had more positive experiences from the field work, student teaching and in their own classrooms. The more the efficacy increases, the more competent the teachers became.

*Differences in perceptions of cooperating teachers among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy.* Encouragement can lead to positive feelings of self-worth. Positive feeling of self-worth can help the first year early childhood teacher feel good about herself as well as feeling good about what she is doing. It is this act that helps to strengthen the efficacy of student teachers and first year teachers. When looking at this theme, two of the teachers are from the medium efficacy group, and all four of the teachers from the high efficacy group can be found here. There was only one teacher with low efficacy mentioned in this theme.

The group of teachers with low efficacy who had minimal support believed that the lack of support made the student teaching experience more difficult and stressful than necessary (Ann and Angela). Ann's cooperating teacher went out of her way to not support her in any way since she had a bad experience as a student teacher. She believed that she would treat Ann the way she had been treated. Ann wondered "how can anyone possibly expect one person to be able to handle all of the different levels of learning in the classroom?" The feeling of being overwhelmed was evident with this group of teachers such as the way Angela was treated in her classroom. Angela was told to "try to do it on her own if she could." Ashley received a lot of support from her teacher and had a good experience. Abby received no support as she felt she did not need any since she did not work with diverse learners.

One member of the medium efficacy group also had the feeling of being overwhelmed at times. Betty believed that she was "not able to meet the many differing needs of the children" in her classroom. Betty was the only one from this group with a medium level of support. Brittany, Brenda, and Becky received a high level of support and they felt as though the encouragement was helpful. They attributed their success in the classroom to the support of their cooperating teachers.

The high efficacy group had all four members receive full support in their student teaching placements. They had positive learning experiences and enjoyed working with the children with diverse needs. They also did not comment on any negative aspects of student teaching. It was deemed successful by all.

*Summary of themes.* The field and student teaching experiences along with the level of support from cooperating teachers can make a difference to the student teacher. If the student teacher has a supportive cooperating teacher, the student teacher is more likely to have a successful experience even if the student teacher has low to medium efficacy, as in the case of Ashley. Ashley had low efficacy and was still able to have a successful student teaching experience due to the level of support she received throughout student teaching. This experience helped to build Ashley's level of efficacy, to gain confidence and self esteem. It is possible that more prefield experiences of this nature would help her change her level of efficacy.

The teachers with fully supportive cooperating teachers and also with high levels of efficacy had very successful experiences that helped to build their self-esteem and confidence level for working with children with disabilities. These teachers had positive field experiences and continued success in the classroom during their first year of teaching.

Research question 3 asked what role higher education plays in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach. The information gleaned from the teachers and the themes showed that higher education played an important role in preparing the teachers to work with students with diverse needs. The absence of references to preparation gave insight. These teachers had the proper support from their cooperating teachers for working in an inclusive classroom. These same teachers also were able to successfully work in their own classrooms upon graduation.

Overall, the teachers with little to medium support from their cooperating teachers and had either low or medium levels of efficacy had mixed results from their student teaching. Those with medium level of efficacy had more success in the classroom than the teachers with low efficacy. This assumption is open for further research as there were a few teachers from each group that made this statement not be correct a 100% of the time, but it does hold true for at least 80% of the time. Efficacy and preparation play a big factor in the success of the student teacher.

The second qualitative research questions was: What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population? The second question addressed the issue of what the first year early childhood teachers have to say about their higher education preparation for teaching in a class with diverse needs. In order to answer this question, teachers were asked about their preparation level. It was found that 25% of the teachers interviewed felt that they did not feel very prepared at all, 58% felt prepared enough for their first classroom, and 17% felt very prepared by their university or college to teach in their class with diverse needs (Figure 5).

The second question addressed the issue of what the first year early childhood teachers had to say about their higher education preparation for teaching in a class with diverse needs. In order to answer this question, teachers were asked about their preparation level. To put the information into categories, it was found that the themes fell into three categories: not prepared, prepared, very prepared. It was found that 25% of the teachers interviewed felt that they did not feel very prepared at all, 58% felt prepared

enough for their first classroom and 17% felt very prepared by their university or college to teach in their class with diverse needs.

The information gleaned from the participants yielded six themes for these two interview questions: on the job training; field experience and university preparation; paperwork and teacher workload; feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed; confidence; and medical issues.

*Differences in perceptions of teacher preparation among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy.* The teachers with low efficacy believed that they did not have enough training especially in the area of special education. Ann believed that she “was prepared” until she “got into her own classroom and found out (that she was not prepared at all).” She was “not prepared at all.” She wished that she “had learned more about the various needs.” Abby was “not happy to work with students with special needs.” She was “glad that she was lucky enough not to get any.” She also believed that she did not have any special education training at all. Ashley stated that she “only had one course of special education.” Angela thought that she had enough special education training when she was in college but now believes the university did not prepared her as much as she wished they had now that she is in her classroom. When she got her first teaching job she found out just how much she does not know about teaching in an inclusive classroom and working with students with diverse needs.

The teachers from the medium efficacy group were split in half with two of them believing that they needed more special education training and two of them believing that they were adequately prepared. Betty wished that there was “more emphasis on inclusive

education in her training.” Brenda also felt as though she “would have liked to have had more training in inclusive education.” Becky stated that she “would have liked more (training in inclusive education) but had enough.” Brittany believed that she had enough training but “could always have learned more (about the inclusive classroom).” This group, even though they had mixed replies, still did not believe that their training was exactly what they needed for the inclusive classroom to work with students with diverse needs.

It was the group of teachers with high efficacy that felt as though they were well prepared for the classroom of students with diverse needs and had the feeling that they were well prepared from their university. Carol stated that “they prepared me well.” Cara believed that the university prepared her “to a great extent” and she was ready for her own classroom. Carly also believed that she was “completely prepared.” Lastly, Chloe was “fully prepared.” Three of the teachers from the high efficacy group also had high special education training. The exception of this group was Carly who had low special education training who believes that she has a natural instinct with children so she is able to fill in the missing information that she had not been taught about special education.

Research question 4 asked what first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population. The teachers fell into the three groups of not feeling prepared by their university, feeling adequately prepared, and being fully prepared by their university.

*Summary of themes.* The level of preparation that the teachers received is directly proportionate to their level of efficacy. The teachers who were not well prepared also had low efficacy. The teachers who believed that they had adequate preparation, had medium efficacy; and the teachers who were of the opinion that they were fully prepared, had high efficacy.

The third qualitative research question was: What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom? The last research question addressed the issue of different qualities that advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom. In order to discover what the teachers felt about this, teachers were asked about their experiences in the inclusive classroom. It was found that 25% felt that there were more things that can impede a first year early childhood teacher than things that can advance them in the classroom. The second group of teachers felt that there are an equal amount of things that can both impede and advance first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom. The last group of teachers replied that there are more things that advance early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom than things that impede them (Figure 6).

Three additional interview questions were asked of the teachers that yielded eight themes: confidence building, teaching is a rewarding experience, organization and scheduling, differentiating strategies, autonomy for students, observation, overwhelmed by amount of work, and lack of planning time.

The answers from two of the interview questions were pooled as to create a similar theme. Interview questions k and l were combined as they pertained to obstacles working in an inclusive classroom. Additional information about successes and frustrations were also addressed within these two questions. These two questions yielded eight themes: Classroom as a community, lack of common planning time, professional development, self-esteem issues, lack of common planning time, too few hours in a day, lack of support by the school, and lack of support by the parents.

*Differences in perceptions of what qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom based on their efficacy.* There appeared to be no set answers for any of the responses to the question. The answers ranged for each group: low, medium, and high efficacy for the qualities that advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom. The answers for this question were personal in nature based on the experience of each teacher interviewed. What bothered some teachers did not bother others. This question had no pattern and so it is difficult to find commonalities among the three levels of efficacy.

*Summary of themes.* Research question number five did not yield enough information or contain a set pattern used to determine results for each efficacy group. Each was based more on a personal basis than overall responses that would fit onto the different levels of efficacy. The information does not support the question either way.

### Interpretation of Findings

The methodology of this study was mixed methods using the sequential explanatory strategy. The use of qualitative and quantitative methodology was combined to achieve the overall quality of the research.

#### *Quantitative Findings*

This study utilized a quantitative nonequivalent post test only research design, using an independent *t*-test. The OSTES scores were utilized to calculate the levels of teacher efficacy. The sample was split into two groups, high and low, using the mean to determine the grouping.

The levels of special education undergraduate learning determined the total amount of special education training. Due to outlier scores that skewed the data, the scores were split into 2 groups, high and low, based on the median.

The study was focused on the effect of efficacy and amount of special education training of first year early childhood teachers on perceived preparedness for teaching the diverse population of students within their classroom. A quantitative instrument, the Ohio State Teachers Efficacy Scale (OSTES), measured the different aspects of teacher efficacy such as student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The level of training of special education training was answered by the three questions added to the OSTES. Eight questions from the MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006) about preparedness were also completed. The dependent variable, was level of perceived preparedness, was measured using The MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006).

For the population of this survey, 351 first year early childhood teachers were contacted either directly or through their principals. Through repeated emails and phone calls, the number who responded and completed returned surveys equaled 28 first year early childhood teachers from Midwest urban school districts in Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan. This was a return rate of eight percent.

*Significance of Research Question 1 Results:* What is the effect of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

H<sub>0</sub>: There will be no significant difference between the low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

H<sub>a</sub>: There will be a significant difference between the low and high levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

The results supported the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference between the low ( $M = 26.17$ ,  $SD = 6.94$ ) and high ( $M = 30.38$ ,  $SD = 7.74$ ) levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom,  $t(26) = -1.486$ ;  $p = .149$  (two-tailed). This was considered a low effect ( $d = -.063$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis for research question 1 was not rejected, there was no significant difference between low and high levels of efficacy.

*Significance of Research Question 2 Results:* What is the effect of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom?

H<sub>0</sub>: There will be no significant difference between the low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

H<sub>a</sub>: There will be a significant difference between the low and high levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom.

There was no significant difference between the low ( $M = 29.79$ ,  $SD = 7.91$ ) and high ( $M = 27.36$ ,  $SD = 7.31$ ) levels of special education training on perceived preparedness for teaching in the inclusive, diverse needs classroom,  $t(26) = .843$ ;  $p = .407$  (two-tailed). The effect size ( $d = 1.02$ ) was low. Therefore, the null hypothesis from research question 2 was not rejected.

### *Qualitative Findings*

The quantitative findings of this study did not support the research cited in the review of the literature but the qualitative findings did support this research. Although the quantitative findings did not find any significance between the low and high special education training groups, the qualitative study did find differences. The results of this study as stated by the first year early childhood teachers during their interviews support the study conducted by Smith and Smith (2000) that found that many regular education teachers are ill prepared for the inclusive classroom. It also supports new research published in the Journal of Early Intervention 2006):

While the majority of preschool classrooms have at least one child with a disability, teachers often have little or no training in education caring for these children. A survey of those overseeing early childhood teacher preparation programs reveal that even though early intervention and special education is part

of many programs' missions, coursework and training often fall short. (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2006, p. 2)

Romi and Leyser (2006) discussed the result of their study that indicated that further research needs to be conducted to determine the impact of various teacher education programs "on attitudes, beliefs and skills of preservice teachers that need to include more experience teaching in inclusive and diverse educational settings" (p. 101). This attitude was also support by this dissertation as the first year early childhood teachers stated in the interview that they wish that they could have had more field experience in inclusive classrooms or in classrooms with diverse needs. Along with the suggestion that the first year early childhood teachers would have liked to have more field experience in inclusive classrooms, they also stated that they wished they had more special education training. Many universities have a course or two for early childhood preservice teachers about special education but because so many of the students entering the regular classrooms have specific needs, the regular classroom teachers feel unprepared for the challenges that having inclusion can bring (Gargiulo et al., 1997).

The first year early childhood teachers who had low levels of special education training also had a low level of perceived preparedness. The same was true for the first year early childhood teachers who had high levels of special education training also had high level of perceived preparedness. Even though this was found to be the case, it was not as significant as the results from the *t* test conducted on perceived preparedness and efficacy.

The findings of the study by Chang et al., (2005) show that improvement is needed in regulating the standards in early childhood education preparation programs,

especially as the movement to full inclusion continues in the school systems. For the classroom teachers with little to no training in special education, inservice and professional development is necessary for the teachers to adapt to what is occurring in the classrooms. The findings of Chang et al. are also supported by the qualitative findings of this study.

Although the quantitative findings did not find any significance between the low and high efficacy training groups, the qualitative study did find differences. The efficacy beliefs of preservice and student teachers are linked to children and control. Preservice teachers' change their efficacy based on personal traits and guided practices (Yeh, 2006). Novice teachers have their efficacy based on stress and commitment to teaching. This was found to coincide with this dissertation. Teacher efficacy changes as the teacher grows with classroom experience (Hoy, 2000). "Some of the most powerful influences on the development of teacher efficacy are mastery experiences during student teaching and the induction year" (Hoy, 2000. p. 2). The novice teachers who had high efficacy found that their teaching experience had greater satisfaction, had a positive reaction to teaching, and had less stress (Hoy, 2000). It was also found that the teachers with high levels of self-efficacy indicated that they had optimism to remain in the teaching field. This was stressed by the teachers of this study. Bandura (1977, 1997) examined four sources of efficacy expectations: mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. If one feels that the experience is positive, then the efficacy level rises; if it is viewed as negative, the efficacy lowers. This also was supported by this study.

Teacher efficacy is a subject that is important to all teacher educators, regardless of what grade level is taught. Teacher efficacy is developed as a preservice teacher and continues developing throughout the teachers' lifetime of teaching. Theories in teacher education and experiences help to build efficacy be it high, medium or low.

The passage of PL 94-142 (1975) made it possible for children with disabilities to be taught in their least restrictive environment and the passage of IDEA (1997) made it possible for students with disabilities to be educated in a general education class. Inclusion of a diverse population of students with many differing levels of need within a regular classroom must be met by the teacher. A problem can arise when the teacher does not feel qualified for teaching children with special needs. Many universities have a course or two for early childhood preservice teachers about special education but because so many of the students entering the regular classrooms have specific needs, the regular classroom teachers feel unprepared for the challenges that having inclusion can bring (Gargiulo et al., 1997). This study by Gargiulo et al. also supports the qualitative findings of this study.

The qualitative aspect of the study included a scripted interview. After completing the OSTES, a sample of the participants were chosen randomly utilizing a random number generator to be interviewed to continue the study. The first year early childhood teachers were interviewed using the four sub-group questions that are a part of the research question.

Interviews were conducted with 12 purposive randomly chosen participants determined by the random sample generator taken from the sample of 28 first year early

childhood teachers. The researcher compiled the results of the OSTES scale and put the surveys into three sets according to their efficacy low, medium, and high. The preparedness survey was analyzed by *t* test. The three questions about special education were totaled to determine the total amount of training each teacher has had. The 12 participants were purposively randomly chosen with a random number generator to continue with the study by choosing four participants from each set.

The qualitative data, the interview answers were coded to determine likeness. The interview data was collated and was compared and contrasted with the data collected from the quantitative research to determine the accuracy of the research question. The results and data analysis with respect to the central research question: How do first year early childhood teachers describe their learning experiences in special education and will their preservice training and field experiences enable them to make adaptations to be able to meet the demands of the many differing physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of the children within their inclusive classroom?

#### *Qualitative Research Questions*

In order to obtain data regarding the subjects' teaching experience, qualitative data were obtained through interviews. This data will be included in this section. This interpretation of the data will address the following research questions, followed by the interview questions used in the study. The qualitative aspect of the study was the interview of 12 participants. The final step of the study was the interview. The interviews were the last research tool used for this study. The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions found listed in this chapter that will answer the four subgroup

research questions. Once the interviews were completed, the information gained was analyzed by putting the answers into themes and then it was coded according to likeness.

### *Significance of Research Question 3 Results*

What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach? (Table 5 and Figure 4)

1. What opportunity have you had to have field experience in an inclusive classroom?
2. What did you gain from this experience?
3. What type of field experience did you have with diverse learners?
4. What did you gain from working with diverse learners?
5. In what grade did you do your student teaching?
6. What was the make-up of the classroom's diverse needs?
7. What support did you receive from your cooperating teacher in working with diverse learners?

The first question addressed the issue of higher education and its role in preparing early childhood teachers for working with diverse populations. Upon compilation of the data from the interviews it was found that there were differences among the three groups of teachers based on their efficacy. The teachers from the low efficacy group had gaps from their higher education experience. These gaps included the understanding of what inclusive education is and having field experiences with no guidance or specific assignments to work with diverse learners.

The medium efficacy also had gaps in their higher education experience. They too did not understand the difference between working with diverse learners and working in an inclusive classroom. They also had a lack of specific assignments to work with diverse learners. To this point, these results mirror those of the low efficacy group. The teachers from the medium efficacy group showed that they had more experience than that of the low efficacy group.

The high efficacy group only had one teacher who stated that she did not have any experience with inclusive classrooms even though she had a high level of special education training. This group did not report on specific troubles in their training from their higher education experiences.

A pattern emerged in the findings. The higher the efficacy of the teachers, the less the teachers commented on difficulties that plagued them from their higher learning experiences. The teachers with low efficacy appeared to have more difficulties with their training. The medium group contained much of the same difficulties but also had positive experiences as well. The high efficacy group had little difficulties and had more positive experiences from the field work, student teaching and in their own classrooms. The more the efficacy increases, the more competent the teachers became.

These findings are supported by several of the studies conducted on teacher preparation. Kremenitez and Miller (2003) stated that thorough teacher preparation is important for creating high quality teachers. Teachers should be trained properly to teach the grade they are teaching (Staton & McCollum, 2002). In order to do this, the field placements for preservice teachers should reflect the proper preparation for classrooms

that the preservice teachers are teaching in. To ensure that this is the case, preservice teachers should have experiences in all different types of classrooms, especially inclusive classrooms. It is the role of the institution to be sure that preservice teachers have learned about special needs and special education and that they also have experience working with children with special needs. This can help to ensure that teacher preparation is effective when the preservice teachers are in the field (Staton & McCollum, 2002). Hooks and Randolph (1994) stated that in order for there to have excellence in teacher preparation from higher education, there needs to be better placements with quality teachers to work with.

The National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC) supports a unified teaching experience to all early childhood teachers to teach children with special needs. Early Childhood teachers should be able to teach both typical and atypical students (NAEYC, 1996). In a study conducted by Staton and McCollum (2002), it was found that early childhood educators need more special education training. This was also supported by the results of this study. The first year early childhood teachers believed that they would have benefited from more special education training. The study conducted by Chang et al. (2005) stated that early childhood teachers have little to no training in educating children with disabilities. In fact, it was found that only 40% of the liberal arts colleges included in the study by Chang et al. required a course in special education as part of their teacher education program and that only 60% of the schools in the study even mentioned the inclusion of training early childhood preservice teachers with special education in their college mission (Chang et al., 2005).

This revelation caused reform in a teacher education program that was the involved in the study conducted by Collier et al. (1998). This was an important aspect in the reform to have the preservice teachers learn how to teach in inclusive classes. The first year early childhood teachers from this study who had more experience working in an inclusive classroom had more confidence in their teaching experiences.

*Research Question 4.* The second question addressed the issue of what the first year early childhood teachers had to say about their higher education preparation for teaching in a class with diverse needs. The results from the interviews gleaned that the level of preparation that the teachers received is directly proportionate to their level of efficacy. The teachers who were not well prepared also had low efficacy. The teachers who believed that they had adequate preparation, had medium efficacy; and the teachers who were of the opinion that they were fully prepared, had high efficacy. These findings are supported by a study completed by Yoon et al. (2006) states that preservice teachers with poor preparation for their field, had low efficacy. Efficacy grows as the teacher gains more knowledge (Tschannen-Moran & Wolfolk-Hoy, 2001). These teachers with the highest levels of efficacy indicated that they had optimism to remain in the teaching field (Hoy, 2000).

Garguilo et al. (1997) stated that regular early childhood teachers feel unprepared for the challenges of inclusion. This was supported by the first year early childhood teachers who did not have adequate preparation with children with special needs. Complete teacher preparation is important for molding high quality teachers (Chang et al., 2005). There were first year early childhood teachers who did not feel that they had

complete teacher education. The first year early childhood teachers stated that the real world was nothing like it was in student teaching and that they did not feel they were prepared. This was also the case for the study conducted by Walbeck et al. (2003). Many of the teachers from the Walbeck study and this study did not know how to do the paperwork for an IEP, how to conduct an IEP and a few of them had never even seen an IEP.

According to Vygotsky, scaffolding is an important aspect in building the framework of learning. According to the first year early childhood teachers, scaffolding did not take place in all of their teacher education classes with their preparation.

The institution of higher learning is responsible for giving preservice teachers the knowledge of theory, practice in the classroom, and diverse field experiences. Theory is the framework of the scaffold. As the preservice teacher gains more knowledge and experience, the professors help the preservice teacher build the scaffold higher (Samaras & Gismondi, 1998). It is up to the professors, cooperating teachers, and supervisors to continue building the scaffold with the preservice teacher until the student is able to complete the teaching experience independently. If this scaffolding is not in place, the preservice teacher lacks the ability to use all of the various strategies necessary when teaching in an inclusive classroom. These various strategies used in the classroom are considered to be best practice when teaching. The first year early childhood teachers did not all have the ability to use a variety of strategies as they did not have the proper scaffolding during their undergraduate years. It is important to use many strategies when teaching to reach all of the students in the classroom, regardless of ability and talent.

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1993) is an important aspect to teaching in a diverse classroom. It enables the teacher to be able to reach all of the students since the theory allows for many different types of instruction that are specifically geared to many different learning styles. Without proper preparation, the first year early childhood teacher struggles with how to teach all of the students in the classroom with diverse learning styles. Strategies and adaptations are all important aspects of teaching in the early childhood classroom (Jacob, 2001).

*Research Question 5.* What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom? Research question number five did not yield enough information or contain a set pattern used to determine results for each efficacy group. Each was based more on a personal basis than overall responses that would fit onto the different levels of efficacy. The information does not support the question either way. The first year early childhood teachers had concerns that went from not realizing just how much work was involved to wishing that there was more support from the schools. Smith and Smith (2000) conducted a study that yielded the same responses. The teachers from their study believed that there was a large amount of stress and extra work involved in teaching in an inclusive classroom. their study also found that the teachers wanted more support from the schools in the classroom and by administration for giving the early childhood teachers more training for the inclusive classrooms by way of inservicing them or allowing them to attend workshops. The same information was relayed by the first year early childhood teachers in this study.

The information gained from the interviews on teacher preparedness, and special education training was compared to the results of the quantitative questions on preparedness, efficacy, and level of special education. The quantitative results were compared to the qualitative results. The results from the t-tests that were completed compared levels of efficacy on perceived preparedness; and levels of special education training on perceived preparedness. The answers from the interviews given from the qualitative interview section of this study were integrated with the quantitative results.

The qualitative results gave the participants the opportunity to explain the answers to the research questions more fully. The interview gave a much richer view of what the first year early childhood believed their experiences and views about efficacy and special education were. They were also able to explain the answers more fully to answer the three other research questions to give the researcher a bigger picture of the experiences of the participants. The small sample size hindered the results from the quantitative research as it did not yield a big enough sample to give a good representation of what first year early childhood teachers believe to be true. The interviews aided in filling in the blanks that the survey results left to give a fuller picture of each participant.

Research question 3 asked what role higher education plays in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach. The information gleaned from the teachers and the themes shows that higher education plays an important role in preparing the teachers to work with students with diverse needs. The absence of references to preparation gave insight. These teachers had the proper support from their

cooperating teachers for working in an inclusive classroom. These same teachers also were able to successfully work in their own classrooms upon graduation.

Overall, the teachers with little to medium support from their cooperating teachers and had either low or medium levels of efficacy had mixed results from their student teaching. Those with medium level of efficacy had more success in the classroom than the teachers with low efficacy. This assumption is not set in stone as there are a few teachers from each group that make this statement not be correct a 100% of the time, but it does hold true for at least 80% of the time. Efficacy and preparation play a big factor in the success of the student teacher.

Research question 4 asked what first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population. The teachers fell into the three groups of not feeling prepared by their university, feeling adequately prepared, and being fully prepared by their university.

The level of preparation that the teachers received is directly proportionate to their level of efficacy. The teachers who were not well prepared also had low efficacy. The teachers who believed that they had adequate preparation, had medium efficacy; and the teachers who were of the opinion that they were fully prepared, had high efficacy.

Research question 5 did not yield enough information or contain a set pattern used to determine results for each efficacy group. Each was based more on a personal basis than overall responses that would fit onto the different levels of efficacy. The information does not support the question either way.

The participants who had little special education training also had low preparedness and low efficacy. The teachers who had a high level of special education training also had high efficacy and high preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. The teachers who had high efficacy and high levels of special education training really enjoyed their jobs.

There were no differences found in the middle groups that had a medium level of special education training, a medium level of efficacy and a medium level of preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. Some of the teachers with medium levels of efficacy and medium levels of special education training liked teaching but did not like all of the paperwork involved with the students. They were uncomfortable with not knowing how to fill it out. They also wanted to have more assistance with the students such as an aide or more interaction with the intervention specialist. They liked their jobs but were unsure of their effectiveness as a teacher with so many children with diverse needs. Teacher A stated that she taught in an inclusive class even though she had only a moderate level of special education training. She stated that she was surprised by all of the different needs of the students. She said she really had to go and do some research so that she was able to know about each child's disability.

*Integration of the research methods.* According to the qualitative research, the teachers who believed that they had adequate preparation, had medium efficacy; and the teachers who were of the opinion that they were fully prepared, had high efficacy.

According to the qualitative research study, the participants who had little special education training also had low preparedness and low efficacy. The teachers who had a

high level of special education training also had high efficacy and high preparedness to work in a diverse inclusive classroom. Multiple sources from different methods were used for triangulation such as peer review and the interviews of the first year early childhood teachers along with the quantitative surveys.

The qualitative results gave the participants the opportunity to explain the answers to the research questions more fully. The interview gave a much richer view of what the first year early childhood believed their experiences and views about efficacy and special education were. They were also able to explain the answers more fully to answer the three other research questions to give the researcher a bigger picture of the experiences of the participants. The small sample size hindered the results from the quantitative research as it did not yield a big enough sample to give a good representation of what first year early childhood teachers believe to be true resulting in findings of no significance of the effect of efficacy and special education training on perceived preparedness. The interviews aided in filling in the blanks that the survey results left to give a fuller picture of each participant.

#### Education Implications for Social Change

This study is important because preservice teachers are faced with challenges upon graduation and their first year of teaching may find them not completely prepared for the demands of their students (Clifford et al., 2005). Preparation in the field of early childhood is crucial to the success in the classroom. Special education training is an important aspect needed to feel prepared for teaching in the inclusive classroom.

Much of the work done thus far has been quantitative studies and this study will add both qualitative and quantitative measures to the field of research. Studies have been found on efficacy of first year early childhood teachers that work with children with disabilities, and studies on teacher preparation and working with children with disabilities have also been found, but this study was the first to connect efficacy and teacher preparation with working with children with disabilities. This is the importance of this study. The qualitative findings of this research study contribute to social change by advocating curriculum changes and more appropriate field placements for undergraduate preservice teachers. Institutions of higher education need to improve the type, quantity, and quality of field placements made at the undergraduate level to aid in preparation and training necessary for all early childhood teachers so that they can teach more successfully in the inclusive classroom.

Teacher educators need more extensive preparation to work with special needs students in inclusive classrooms. Teacher educators need more extensive infusion of special education content in the curriculum and more intensive and varied field experiences in settings with children both with and without disabilities (Romi & Leyser, 2006; Staton & McCollum, 2002). The data collected from the first year early childhood teachers from this dissertation also support the findings from these studies conducted by Romi and Leyser (2006) and Staton and McCollum (2002). It was also stated that changes in special education programs should be adjusted as well to be sure that the teacher preparation is effective for when the students work in the field. The results from this study support the same findings.

Outside the bounds of this study, results could be important to future teacher education programs for social change. The findings could be used to narrow the gap between early childhood intervention specialists (special education teachers) and regular early childhood education teachers. This new research showed that regular education teachers have little training with special needs and need to depend heavily on the intervention specialist to aid them with the special needs students within their classrooms. The first year early childhood teachers that worked collaboratively with the intervention specialist had the most success in their classroom with the diverse needs of the students. In order to be most effective, teachers need to be able to have time to plan with the other teachers they teach with. In an early childhood classroom, teachers are often unable to get their planning time to coincide due to the varying special classes and the schedules that they run on. This is definitely an issue for early childhood teachers. Middle school teachers and high school teachers are often more successful having planning periods that coincide with their partner teacher or team of teachers so that they can plan effectively as a department. Within the inclusive classroom, regular early childhood teachers need more knowledge about the special education population to be a more effective educator. This was a key point made by the first year early childhood teachers from this study.

Results of this study will be beneficial to social change for researchers, higher education, educators, educational leaders, college administrators, curriculum changes in higher education, students with special needs, and teachers so that they will be better able to prepare preservice teachers for the duties of the classroom and for the preservice

teachers to be qualified to teach successfully in the inclusive classroom during their first year of teaching.

Students with special needs are the ones who will benefit the most from this study as they will be taught by teachers who are qualified to teach students with diverse needs. These early childhood teachers will be able to teach the students with diverse needs using a variety of strategies that are individualized for the students within the classroom.

The researchers will be able to find a new body of research about teacher efficacy, preparedness, and special education training. As there has been a gap in the research, this new research helps to close that gap for those who are interested in how these different aspects relate to one another.

The results from this study impact higher education, college administrators, and curriculum changes in higher education due to the fact that the first year early childhood teachers believed that they needed to have more special education training in the early childhood curriculum and more teaching experiences within the methods courses in inclusive classroom and in classes with students with diverse needs. College administrators can revise their current early childhood courses to include more specialized training in special education and have more placements within classes that were inclusive. Teachers will also benefit from having more special education training so that they can be more effective in the inclusive classrooms and in any classroom that has children with diverse needs.

The findings can lead to having early childhood teachers better prepared for the inclusive classroom by having more field experience in special education and in inclusive

classes before student teaching. The results of this study show that first year early childhood teachers feel that they were not fully prepared to teach in the inclusive classroom, the findings will support the idea that teacher education curriculum will need to become more involved in special education training both in the classroom and in the field. A student teacher should not be placed in a classroom with a cooperating teacher that does not have the understanding, responsibility, and foresight to teach all children in her class regardless of ability. Student teaching is practice for teaching upon graduating college. If the student teacher does not have the proper training it is the fault of the institution of higher learning for placing a student in a substandard student teaching placement with teachers who are biased and uneducated.

Nonchalance can take a different form as it did with the student teachers who had a medium level of support from their cooperative teachers. The student teachers needed to have an active member of their teaching team as they complete their student teaching experience. Student teachers are out in the field and in the classrooms everyday without the daily support of their university supervisor. It is the role of the cooperating teacher to guide the student teachers as they learn how to become an independent teacher. This is the last part of Vygotsky's belief of scaffolding before gaining independence. If the student teacher does not achieve this, she will not be able to successfully teach in her own classroom upon graduating if she has not mastered independence. Unfortunately, this also falls under the category of gaps in higher education curriculum.

This finding could lend support to having higher education create better guidelines for the curriculum in regards to special education training that will in fact

affect students, teachers, professors, researchers and college administration. This could also help support the need for more professional development in schools.

#### Recommendations for Action

The qualitative findings of this dissertation have found that teacher education programs need to adapt and change the curriculum with the changing times. These findings coincide with the findings of that from Grossman and Williston (2002). More time in diverse classrooms for field experience will be beneficial for the preservice teachers, along with more special education training. The special education training should be specifically structured for early childhood teachers. Early childhood curriculum in higher education will need to reflect the changes that are taking place in the classrooms. As a professor, it will be important to teach in a manner that will support scaffolding for the preservice teachers. It would also be necessary to teach the preservice teachers with a blended curriculum to ensure that they have been exposed to more special education. Finally, the preservice teachers will be placed into a variety of quality field placements including inclusive classrooms as underclassmen so that the preservice teachers can have some experience in many different types of classrooms before they begin student teaching.

I will add more special education training into each early childhood course that is taught in the education department of the university for which the researcher teaches. Along with that, sharing these results of the study with university colleagues to encourage them to add more special education training will also be done. With these results in hand, the researcher will discuss the results with the field placement director to find more

diverse placements for the early childhood preservice teachers for field work within the method courses. A presentation will be done at a workshop conducted with the education department at the university to disseminate the findings to improve the curriculum taught at the higher educational level. The researcher will also be using the information from this dissertation for publication to get the results and new information out to others that are not involved in the university where the researcher teaches.

#### Future Research

Due to the small sample size of this study, it would be interesting to find a bigger sample and conduct this quantitative study again to see if the results would be any different regarding the special education training for early childhood teachers. There is little research about exactly how much special education training is necessary for an early childhood educator to be successful within the inclusive classroom. Something must be done to meet the challenges of NCLB and IDEA. There is a call for standardization for states' standards in teacher education to be created for the early childhood educators who focus on teaching children birth through age 8 (Gargiulo et al., 1997). The research within the study by Gargiulo, et al., indicated a need for more special education preparation for regular education teachers. The qualitative results of this dissertation support the same findings.

The research in the literature review stated in many of the studies that more research is needed to complete the study in its entirety (Walbeck et al., 2003; Woolfolk-Hoy & Milner, 2002; Gargiulo et al., 1997). The findings of these studies are also the

case for this study. With inclusion taking place across America and beyond, special education training becomes an important aspect of teacher training.

1. It is still unclear as to how much special education training is necessary to be an effective teacher in an inclusive classroom with positive self efficacy. More information is needed to determine just how much special education training is necessary for early childhood teachers to feel successful in the inclusive classroom or to work with students with diverse needs to improve their efficacy. A study that follows early childhood preservice teachers from one university verses another university with similar curriculum and requirements may be helpful to determine this outcome.

The studies that involved early childhood and elementary preservice teachers stated that special education training was necessary and some of the teacher education programs are beginning to have the preservice teachers have a better understanding of students with special needs.

2. The implications of teacher education programs not giving students field experiences with special needs students is a difficult concept with so many schools involved in inclusion in 2009. Research can be conducted with two or more higher education institutions that have students that do field work in inclusive classrooms or in classrooms with diverse needs versus higher education institutions that do not do field work in these settings.
3. There is a need for further research as to how much special education training is necessary to teach successfully in an inclusive classroom, regardless of the

grade level (Gargiulo et al, 1997). More information is needed to determine just how much special education training is necessary for early childhood teachers to be successful in the inclusive classroom or to work with students with diverse needs. A study that follows early childhood preservice teachers from one university verses another university with similar curriculum and requirements may be helpful to determine this outcome.

#### Reflection of the Researcher

##### *Limitations of the Study*

One of the conditions that affected the study was the lack of response from both principals and first year early childhood teachers from the Midwest area. There were 351 first year early childhood teachers that were contacted either directly or through their principals with the hopes of receiving a response of 100 participants. This was not the case and the number of returned surveys equaled 28. This was a return rate of 8%. The time of the year also played a part in the low return rate as first year teachers and principals were contacted as the new school year was beginning as this study began and many of the teachers were too busy to become involved.

I did not expect to have such a difficult time getting responses returned via email as many of the studies that have been read discuss the use of email and it is again not discussed as a limitation. The researcher previously believed that it would be not be difficult to receive 100 responses to the surveys since there were 351 teachers to contact. After reading many studies, this aspect was not generally discussed.

Another limitation was the use of electronic devices. The researcher contacted the teachers and principals via email and also the telephone. In many instances, the email was deleted without having been read and the telephone calls mostly went to voicemail. There were few instances that the researcher actually contacted the teacher in person on the first attempt.

The last limitation was the short study data collection time. In order to complete the study, the turn around time needed to be completed within a six week period. This was difficult to get a larger amount of responses from the first year early childhood teachers.

#### *Researcher Bias*

The researcher previously believed that research was going to bring about unexpected results. With this study, this was not really the case. The researcher believed that that the first year early childhood teachers would participate in this study and the level of involvement was unexpected as many did not wish to become involved. The first year early childhood teachers who were chosen to continue with the study were very supportive of the study.

The researcher was not expecting to have so many first year early childhood teachers fall within the medium range in perceived preparedness, special education training and with regards to efficacy. The expectations were that there would be more of a range among the first year early childhood teachers within the extremes of high levels and low levels.

*Researcher's Experience in the Research Process*

The researcher's concern about the lack of interest in participating in the research was troubling as the data was being collected. The amount of participants was also a concern as the research worried if the data that was obtained would be a reflection of the first year early childhood teachers of the Midwest. It was important for this study to help to make a difference in the lives of early childhood educators and for special needs students to make the most of the education experience and to make teaching and learning better for all involved by having the most qualified teachers teaching the children of today and tomorrow.

*Effects of the Research on the Participants*

The researcher made sure that the participants felt comfortable throughout the entire research process. It was stated several times throughout the interviews that they "Never thought of doing it that way." Or they would be "Working harder to make the classroom be more successful with all of the children." Some of the interview questions were thought provoking to a few of them and they stated that they had not thought of that previously and would try to incorporate a few new strategies when teaching or would ask for more help from the school.

*"Take-Home Message"*

As an early childhood teacher, it is often their role to identify students who have developmental delays and refer students who are not developing normally. It is also the early childhood teacher who interacts with children from preschool, beginning at age three through age eight in 3rd grade. In some cases, according to state licensure, some

early childhood teachers are licensed from birth through age eight. This is all the more reason for the need for early childhood teachers to have a stronger background with students with special needs. An extended knowledge of different disabilities, early childhood educators can help to identify children with special needs. This knowledge will allow the early childhood teacher to refer the children and their families for testing or further identification of difficulties. Early intervention is key to helping preschoolers get the much needed results to help to catch them up as best as they can to their typically developing peers.

Early childhood teachers who have specialized training with special needs and high efficacy are more successful in the classroom. This is also true of the early childhood teachers who have had high levels of preparedness by teaching in a classroom with diverse needs or in an inclusive classroom beginning at the preservice level. Early childhood teachers who have had curriculum in the teacher education training that is laden with good field experience placements and a strong amount of theory have also been successful in the inclusive classroom.

It is evident that the early childhood teachers who are most successful in the inclusive classroom with students' with diverse needs have learned from an appropriate curriculum in their teacher education program that had field experiences in classrooms with diverse learners and this has helped shape these early childhood teachers' positive efficacy.

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## APPENDIX A

### Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

Intelligence	Definition
Verbal-Linguistic	The ability to use words and language.
Logical-Mathematical	The capacity for inductive and deductive thinking and reasoning, as well as the use of numbers and the recognition of abstract patterns.
Visual-Spatial	The ability to visualize objects and spatial dimensions, and create internal images and pictures.
Body-Kinesthetic	The wisdom of the body and the ability to control physical motion.
Musical-Rhythmic	The ability to recognize tonal patterns and sounds, as well as sensitivity to rhythms and beats.
Interpersonal	The capacity for a person-to-person communications and relationships.
Intrapersonal	The spiritual, inner states of being, self-reflection, and awareness.
Naturalist	One who demonstrates expertise in recognition and classification of the numerous species of the environment.

(Gardner, 1998)

## APPENDIX B

### Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale1 (short form) OSTES Teacher Beliefs - How much can you do?

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help me gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Please put an X in your answer box. Your answers are confidential. The rating scale of the numbers is as follows:

(1) Nothing (2) Very Little (3) Some (4) Quite a bit (5) A Great Deal

	1	2	3	4	5
1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?					
2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school?					
3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?					
4. How much can you do to help your students' value learning?					
5. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?					
6. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?					
7. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?					
8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?					
9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?					
10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?					
11. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?					
12. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?					

## Teacher Preparedness- MetLife American Teacher Survey (2006)

How prepared were you during your first year of teaching? Please put an X in the box that best answers the question.

(1) Not at all prepared (2) Not too prepared (3) Prepared (4) Very prepared 5) Extremely prepared

How prepared were you for the following aspects of your first teaching position? (Q410, p. 106)	1	2	3	4	5
1. To teach subject matter? (Q410, p. 106)					
2. To maintain order and discipline? (Q410, p. 106)					
3. To work with children with varying abilities? (Q410, p. 107)					
4. To work with the number of students with needs students that you deal with? (Q415, p. 108)					
5. Student apathy that affects learning? (Q800, p. 117)					
6. Disorderly student behavior? (Q800, p. 117)					
7. Students lacking basic skills? (Q800, p. 117)					
8. Having enough time to help individual students? (Q500, p. 109)					

Questions taken from Met Life American Teachers Survey (2006). Used with permission by author.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

School name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade taught \_\_\_\_\_

The name of the College or University that you graduated from: \_\_\_\_\_

### Special Education Training

Please state the appropriate answer to the following questions.

1. During your university experience, how many special education courses have you taken?
2. How many weeks of special education field experience did you have during your university experience?
3. How many hours of school district training have you received about special education?

(1) Nothing (2) Very Little (3) Some (4) Quite a bit (5) A Great Deal

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT FORM Teacher efficacy

You are invited to participate in a research study of preparedness for the classroom. You were selected as a possible participant due to your status as a first year early childhood teacher in the education field. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Leslie Wasserman, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

**Background Information:** Determine level of preparation to deal with classroom issues and teacher efficacy.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey of 12 questions that should take approximately 10 minutes.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Leslie Wasserman. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time later without affecting those relationships.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

There are no risks associated with participating in this study and there are no short or long-term benefits to participating in this study.

In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

**Compensation:**

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Leslie Wasserman. The researcher's faculty mentor is Dr. Joe Ann Hinrichs at [joeann.hinrichs@waldenu.edu](mailto:joeann.hinrichs@waldenu.edu). You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact them via email. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott; you may contact her at 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210, if you have questions about your participation in this study.

You will receive a copy of this form from the researcher.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of Participant

Participant Signature

Signature of Investigator

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## APPENDIX D

Dear Teachers:

Thank you so much for your consideration in helping me collect my research for my PhD in early childhood education. I am targeting all early childhood teachers who have completed one year of teaching in an early childhood classroom and/or are beginning their second year of teaching in ECE. The survey consists of 12 questions that ask about your efficacy.

If you choose to participate, the survey can be downloaded and returned to me via email: [lesliewass@aol.com](mailto:lesliewass@aol.com). The consent forms can be mailed in the self addressed, stamped envelope that will send you. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me or call 330-725-7224. I welcome any comments or concerns that you may have.

I really appreciate your dedication to education and thank you for helping me with my research.

Sincerely,

Leslie Wasserman

## APPENDIX E

### *Qualitative Research questions and interview questions*

3. What role does higher education play in preparing early childhood teachers for the diverse population they teach?
  - a. What opportunity have you had to have field experience in an inclusive classroom?
  - b. What did you gain from this experience?
  - c. What type of field experience did you have with diverse learners?
  - d. What did you gain from working with diverse learners?
  - e. In what grade did you do your student teaching?
  - f. What was the make-up of the classroom's diverse needs?
  - g. What support did you receive from your cooperating teacher in working with diverse learners?
  
4. What do first year early childhood teachers have to say about their early childhood education program from higher education in regards to preparation for teaching in a class with a diverse population?
  - a. How well do you feel that your university fully prepared you to teach in an inclusive classroom?
  - b. What were your initial feelings when you started working with diverse learners while at the university or in the classroom?
  - c. How do you feel about working with children with diverse needs now?

- d. What difficulties did you have adapting to the diverse needs of your students initially?
  - e. How adequate was the special education training you received from your university now that you are working in your own classroom?
5. What qualities advance or impede first year early childhood teachers working in an inclusive classroom?
- a. How do you feel about working with children with diverse needs now?
  - b. What types of diverse needs are addressed among the children that you teach in your classroom?
  - c. What did you do to make it easier to adapt to working with diverse learners?
  - d. What difficulties did you have adapting to the diverse needs of your students now as you are at the end of the school year?
  - e. What kind of support do you receive from support staff? What kind of support staff (aide, paraprofessional, intervention specialist, etc.)?
  - f. Is there an intervention specialist assigned to help you with your class?  
What kind of assistance did you receive from an intervention specialist?
  - g. How many students are on a 504 plan?
  - h. How many students have identified needs and are on IEPs?
  - i. How many students have unidentified needs?
  - j. What is your class size?

- k. What has been your biggest obstacle with working in an inclusive classroom?
- l. Is there anything further that you would like to share about working in your inclusive classroom? Successes and/or frustrations?

## APPENDIX F

### *Interview Times of Participants*

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Date	Person Interviewed	Length of Interviews
August 30, 2008	Ann	35 minutes
August 30, 2008	Ashley	40 minutes
August 31, 2008	Brittany	25 minutes
August 31, 2008	Angela	33 minutes
August 31, 2008	Carly	54 minutes
August 31, 2008	Brenda	43 minutes
September 2, 2008	Cara	30 minutes
September 4, 2008	Betty	28 minutes
September 6, 2008	Abby	26 minutes
September 6, 2008	Chloe	54 minutes
September 6, 2008	Becky	44 minutes
September 7, 2008	Carol	41 minutes

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CURRICULUM VITAE  
**Leslie Haley Wasserman**  
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**Home: 330-725-7224**  
**Cell: 216-440-0655**  
**Email: [lesliewass@aol.com](mailto:lesliewass@aol.com)**

**Education:**

ABD, Ph.D. in Education, August 2010

Concentration: Early Childhood Education, GPA 4.0

Dissertation: Preparation and Efficacy of First Year Early Childhood Educators: Meeting the Needs of the Diverse Population of Students

Walden University

Validation, Ashland University, Early Education of the Handicapped Child, 1994

Now known as Early Childhood Intervention Specialist

M. Ed., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1988

Concentration: Early Childhood Education

B.S. in Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1987

Concentration: Early Childhood Education

**Certification:**

Current State of Ohio Department of Education Five Year License: Kindergarten to Primary, PreKindergarten, and Early Education of the Handicapped Child.

**Experience:**

Assistant Professor of Education, Early Childhood, 2008-Present

Heidelberg University

Undergraduate courses taught: Foundations of Reading; Diagnosis of Reading Difficulties; Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction: Pre-K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade; Teaching Written Composition (K-12); Introduction to Exceptionalities; and Math Experiences in Early Childhood education.

Graduate courses taught: Recent Trends in Elementary Education

Consulting Editor- NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children)

3 year appointment September 1, 2009-August 30, 2012

NAEYC's journal, *Young Children*

Review and critique 12-15 manuscripts a year, review book and/or other draft publications. Identifying and nurturing potential authors and provide evaluations and suggestions for all aspects of the NAEYC's publications program.

Online Adjunct Instructor, Education 2009

Kaplan University – Undergraduate

Courses taught: Developmental writing; Infant and Toddler Development

Student Teaching Coordinator of Science Cohort/Supervisor, 2008

University of Akron- Graduate

Grant from Ohio Department of Education that provides Ohio Core Science Licensure for teachers of grades 7-12. Accelerated one year program in Earth, Life, Chemistry, or Physics for graduate level science majors. Responsibilities include placements for student teaching, liaison between the school systems and the University of Akron, supervise student teachers.

Online Instructor, 2008-Present

Learning Bridges

Teach Vocabulary Strategies course that provides graduate level teachers with four methods to improve vocabulary skills for specific purposes that have a powerful impact on learning. Vocabulary Strategies to Improve Comprehension is a method of combining direct instructional strategies with webbing, semantic associations, and analogies to increase content comprehension. Vocabulary - Math Context is a teaching strategy that enables students to learn the common sense relationship between context vocabulary and Mathematical representations. It will enable the learner to understand and utilize the basic language of logic in mathematical situations. Vocabulary through Context is a teaching strategy that enables students to learn the common sense relationship between context vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension.

Associate Instructor, 2005-2008

University of Akron

Courses Taught: *Undergraduate*: Integrated Primary Curriculum and field experience; Advanced Integrated Primary Curriculum and field experience; Evaluating Language Literacy and field experience; Introduction to Education; Child, Family, and School; Understanding Literature Development and Phonemic Awareness; and Teaching Multiple Texts through Genre.

*Graduate*: Psychology of Instruction for Teaching and Learning

Supervising Teacher 1/2006-2008

University of Akron

Supervisor of Early Childhood student teachers, and Early Childhood Intervention Specialist student teachers- undergraduate. Science Cohort- graduate.

Adjunct Faculty, 2002-2004  
 Lorain County Community College  
 Courses Taught: Child Guidance and Classroom Management; Creative Physical Activity; Parent Involvement; Health, Safety, and Nutrition.

Supervising Teacher, 2002-2004  
 Lorain County Community College  
 Supervisor of Early Childhood student teachers

The Connecting Link, 2003  
 Graduate level instructor  
 Course Taught: Children at Risk- Special Needs

Maternity Leave, 1998-2002

First Grade Teacher, 1996-1998  
 St. Thomas More School, Brooklyn, OH

Center Based Itinerant Special Needs Preschool Teacher, 1994-1996  
 Educational Service Center of Lorain County  
 Serviced preschool students from: Keystone, Firelands, Avon, Columbia Station, and Clearview School systems. Wrote and implemented IEP's, worked collaboratively with differing social agencies. Trained in play based assessment, EC-SPEED (Early Childhood Special Education) trained in 20 hour course.

Maternity Leave, 1991-1994

First Grade Teacher/ Kindergarten Teacher, 1989-1991  
 Prince George's County Schools, Maryland

Director/Preschool Teacher, 1988  
 Georgetown Nursery School  
 Washington, DC

**Research Interests:**

Brain based Education  
 Early Childhood Special Needs  
 Teacher Education  
 Preservice Teachers  
 Early Childhood Literacy  
 Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum  
 Gifted Education

**Publications:**

Wasserman, L.H. (2009). Demystifying outdated theories about how the brain works. In B. Kuzmanoviae & A. Cuevas (Eds.), *Recent trends in education*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Publishers.

Wasserman, L. H. (2009). The Correlation between Brain Development, Language Acquisition, and Cognition. In K. Partridge (Ed.), *The reference shelf: The brain* (pp. 97-103). New York: H. W. Wilson Company.

Wasserman, L.H. (2007). The Correlation between Brain Development, Language Acquisition, and Cognition, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34, 6, 415-418.

**Manuscript Reviewer:**

Manuscript reviewer for *Early Childhood Education Journal* 2007, 2008, 2009

Text book reviewer for McGraw Hill Publishing 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010

Reviewer for TEACH (2011) written by Fraser

American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2011 Annual Meeting Reviewer for Early Childhood Education and Child Development- Review of 10 manuscripts

American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2011 Annual Meeting Reviewer for Special Education Research- Review of 10 manuscripts

Consulting Editor- NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) 3 year appointment September 1, 2009-August 30, 2012

NAEYC's journal, *Young Children*- Review and critique 12-15 manuscripts a year, review book and/or other draft publications. Identifying and nurturing potential authors and provide evaluations and suggestions for all aspects of the NAEYC's publications program.

**Professional Development:**

Chosen to attend and participate in the Population Connection's Leadership Training Institute for Ohio Educators held at Mohican Resort, Perrysville, OH July 31-August 1, 2010

**Presentations:**

Presenter at the Ohio Confederation of Teacher Education Organizations (OCTEO) Conference Presentation Title: The Journaling Tool and its Effectiveness in Teacher Education, October 15, 2009.

Competition Judge for Ohio Future Educators Association State Conference (OFEA) April 18, 2008 in the category of prepared and impromptu speech.

A Summit on Public Education, 2006

Facilitator of break out session- instructional and curricular strategies of NCLB Symposium of International Northeast Ohio chapters of Phi Delta Kappa

**Skills and Qualifications:**

Thorough knowledge of Black Board and ecollege online course programs

Web CT

Task Stream

TK20

Internet course work

Extensive research skills

Positive rapport with students and faculty

**Strengths**

Flexible

Dedicated

Determined

Caring

Understanding

**Professional Affiliations:**

NAEYC- National Association for the Education of Young Children

AERA- American Educational Research Association

Phi Delta Kappa

NAECTE-National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators

TEAC- Teacher/Educator Group at Heidelberg University

S.T. e P.S. - Students, Teachers and Parents

P.A.C.E. – T.E.A.M. - Parents Advocating Challenge Education- Together Everyone

Achieves more- Gifted and Talented Education

National PTA/PTO

OCTEO- Ohio Confederation of Teacher Education Organizations

OATE- Ohio Association of Teacher Educators

**References:**

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