ABSTRACT
                A survey was conducted to investigate special education
teaching conditions. A total of 246 special education teachers, 158 special
education administrators, 110 principles, and 72 regular education teachers
responded to survey questions that addressed the availability of appropriate
materials, the provision of suitable physical facilities, the level of
satisfaction for items related to teaching children with exceptionalities,
collegiality/professionalism and communication, and the development of
Individualized Education Programs. Findings indicate: (1) administrators took
a more positive view of the conditions for teaching students with
exceptionalities than teachers did; (2) general education teachers have
students with exceptional learning needs in their classes, with the largest
group being students with learning disabilities; (3) special education
teachers report feeling isolated from, and having few opportunities to
collaborate with other teachers; (4) teachers in both general and special
education report having little or no time to talk and plan collaboratively
for students with special needs; (5) special education teachers reported they
often do not have the resources and materials they need; and (6) the top
three concerns of special education teachers were caseload, time for
planning, and paperwork. Appendices include the mission statement and the
code of ethics of the Council for Exceptional Children. (CR)

Bright Futures for
Exceptional Learners:

TECHNICAL REPORT

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October 2000

Council for
Exceptional
Children

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Conditions for Special Education Teaching:
CEC Commission Technical Report

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The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has undertaken a study of the conditions for special education teaching as part of its overall mission to help "professionals achieve the conditions and resources necessary for effective practice" (CEC Mission, see Appendix A). On April 18, 1998 The Council for Exceptional Children's Delegate Assembly passed the following resolution on the conditions for special education teaching:

CEC Resolution on the Conditions for
Special Education Teaching

Whereas, The adverse conditions of special education teaching are clearly related to adverse educational outcomes for students with disabilities at all grade levels; and
Whereas, Special educators cannot practice according to the profession's standards without appropriate human, technological, and instructional resources; and
Whereas, Each year approximately twenty thousand people practice special education without appropriate professional credentials; and
Whereas, Approximately five thousand professional teaching positions in special education remain vacant; and
Whereas, Special educators are often expected to provide quality professional services with caseloads and class sizes that are unrealistic; and
Whereas, Special education teachers too frequently lack the administrative support and the instructional and technological resources needed to practice professionally; and
Whereas, Adverse conditions encourage special educators to leave the profession at a rate higher than other teachers.
Therefore, be it resolved, That the Council for Exceptional Children will immediately initiate an aggressive campaign to improve the conditions for special education instruction by drawing attention to the conditions that enhance the professional practice of special educators in accordance with their CEC Code of Ethics and the CEC Standards for Professional Practice.

CEC Delegate Assembly
April 18, 1998

The Presidential Commission on Conditions for Special Education Teaching (the Commission) was charged to:

- Identify the conditions and obstacles that prevent special educators from practicing within the CEC Code of Ethics and Standards for Practice (see Appendix B);
- Determine the potential solutions and strategies for addressing the obstacles and conditions; and
- Involve the stakeholders in action planning and implementation of these strategies.

Several steps were taken in response to the charge. A pilot web survey was posted, focus groups were held around the country, and a major literature review was completed to identify the key issues faced in the teaching of students with exceptionalities. This preliminary work laid the foundation for the development of a survey to assess the conditions educators face in their work with students with exceptionalities.

The central impact of the conditions of teaching is the quality of services received by students, and the Commission has used this as the focal point for its work. The work of the Commission, while primarily addressing special educators, will affect all those with an interest in the educational needs of students with exceptionalities. Because of this, the Commission has included a broader group - general education teachers, administrators, parents, and community members - in its stakeholders group for data collection, action planning, and implementation. This report presents the results from the Commission's survey.

Methods

The major areas for inclusion in the survey design were drawn from the discussions of the Commission, the pilot focus groups, the initial web survey, and the commission's literature review (Kozleski, Boland, Sueltz, & Chandler, 1999). The areas of concern included: availability of appropriate materials to work with students with exceptionalities; physical facilities provided for students with exceptionalities; collegiality and professionalism for special education teachers; and communication regarding students with exceptionalities. In addition to these broad areas of concern, specific issues emerged that were included in the survey. These issues were caseload, class size, paperwork (IEPs', etc.); planning time, and general satisfaction with work.

Design of the Survey

The survey was drafted to reflect the areas of concern identified by the commission. The survey comprised four sections for information collection and an extensive demographics section for use during the analysis of responses. Several question formats were used in the survey because the research interests spanned a variety of types of information. The demographic section included a checklist response to questions; a likert scale was selected for parts one and two; a checklist response was selected for part three; and a rank-order was used in part four. Specific directions accompanied each section and the responses were made directly on the survey. This format was selected to make the process as "user-friendly" as possible.

Part I of the survey was set up on a 4 point likert scale to establish "degree of agreement" with the statement made (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree). Information in Part 1dealt with two areas, the availability of appropriate materials to work with students with exceptionalities and the provision of suitable physical facilities for students with exceptionalities. Part II, also a likert scale, asked respondents to rate the level of satisfaction for items on two major areas related to teaching exceptional students, collegiality/professionalism and communication (1 = unsatisfied; 2 = needs improvement; 3 = satisfactory; 4 = above average; 5 = excellent). The scales for Parts I and II included the option of selecting "0 = not applicable."

Part III of the survey dealt with specific areas of concern and used a check-response to eight fill-in-the-blank statements. The items in Part III covered time spent on IEP development planning time collaborative instruction time length of IEPs' and general satisfaction with work. Part IV asked respondents to rank from most important to least important 10 areas of concern that impact the conditions of teaching students with exceptionalities. Figure 1 gives sample items for Parts I, II, III, and IV of the survey.

Survey Review and Revision

The draft items were reviewed initially by a small working committee of the Commission, for comprehensive coverage of the areas of concern and for wording of the items included. Items were added or modified based on this feedback. The next draft of the items was sent out to the entire Commission for feedback, and revisions were made where needed. Once this had been completed, a small pilot was

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conducted with three groups of respondents: six special education teachers; eight general education teachers; and four principals. The questions for the pilot respondents were:

- How long did the survey take?
- Are the directions clear?
- Is it hard to change formats?
- Are the items clear?
- How could we improve the survey?

The feedback from the pilot led us to modify the wording of one or two questions and the new draft was reviewed by the working committee of the Commission to ensure that the content had not been changed. The final formatted survey was sent to all Commission members for one last review; however, no additional changes were made.

Sampling Procedure

The Commission determined that the following populations should be included in the survey: special education teachers; general education teachers; special education administrators; principals and parents. A probability-based random sampling procedure was used to select 400 survey recipients for each group from the lists provided. The 400 special education teachers were drawn from The Council for Exceptional Children's general membership list, excluding the CASE administrator's division list. The special education administrators were drawn for the CEC CASE list. The names were drawn by dividing the total membership list number by the size of the desired sample and taking that number as the random-selection number (e.g., CASE has 5,279 members; divided by 400 = 13; therefore every 13th name on the list was included in the sample). The parent sample was drawn from the CEC associate member list in the same fashion. The CEC associate membership allows parents to join the organization at a reduced price. The sample we drew for the survey revealed that several of the associate members were parents of adult "children" who were no longer in school, and that several associate members were also active professionals working within the field of special education in some capacity. Because the parent sample group did not represent our target population, parents of school-age children, these data were excluded from the overall analysis.

The general education lists were purchased by CEC from an educational survey group who were asked to provide a randomly selected group of 200 elementary education (K- 5) and 200 randomly selected secondary teachers (6 -12).

The same group provided the list for the principals (200 elementary and 200 secondary).

Two sets of mailing labels were requested for each group. The first set was used to send the initial survey request, and the second set was used to send a postcard reminder to those who had not returned surveys.

Survey Dissemination and Coding

The surveys were mailed with a cover letter from the Commission Co-chairs, and a stamped return envelope. Survey recipients were asked to return the survey within three weeks; a follow-up postcard was used to request return of surveys not received by the deadline. The return envelopes and the reminder postcard were used to increase the return rate of surveys.

The surveys were color coded by group to help track the respondents. In addition, each survey was given a seven digit code to identify its recipient. The code included: the list the recipient was drawn from, the specific number of the name on the list, and the respondent's region of the country. These codes were used to track the incoming surveys while maintaining the anonymity of respondents.

When the surveys were returned each one was checked off the list. The surveys were then individually reviewed and the data was prepared for coding. This process involved checking for missing or incomplete data and making decisions regarding confusing markings on the survey and about the inclusion of survey results. The same team of three trained reviewers looked at all the surveys and prepared the code sheets for data entry. If questions arose about the survey "clean-up" process, the principal investigator reviewed the survey and made the final decision regarding inclusion of the data.

Professional data entry assistants entered the data, and it was independently entered twice to avoid errors. When differences occurred in the data sets the data was compared with the original code-sheet and survey to resolve the discrepancy. The same team who prepared the data for coding did the review and resolved the discrepancies. If any question remained about the use of the data, the principal investigator made the final decision.

The comments that accompanied some of the surveys (the large majority of comments were from special education teachers) were copied with their identification code for later review and analysis. These are presented in the section "Specific Findings for Special Education Teachers."

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Data Analysis

The data analysis proceeded in phases. The first phase was a descriptive analysis of who had returned the survey and the establishment of weighted sampling probabilities. The weighted samples were used to adjust for the differences in the probability that any one person would be included in the sample given the different numbers of individuals on the overall list the person was drawn from. For example, the CEC list for CASE members has 5,279 names while the general CEC list has just over 50,000 members. Therefore the possibility that a person would be included in our sample of 400 differed for each list. The weighted sampling gives more confidence that the sample drawn is representative of the list from which it was taken.

The second phase was to establish the integrity of the sub-scales of the survey (materials available, physical facilities, collegiality/professionalism, and communication) by determining the Cronbach's alphas for each. The Cronbach's alphas ensure that the items in each sub-scale can be combined to form an overall response.

The third phase was the actual analysis of the data and the comparison of responses by groups. During the analysis the general education teachers and principals were separated into elementary and secondary to reveal patterns that might have differed across the grade levels. The parent data was not included in the contrasts because problems, mentioned earlier, were evident in the sampling procedures. Anova was used to examine the contrasts across groups on the sub-scales of the survey. The following contrasts were examined: special educators vs. general educators; elementary educators vs. secondary educators; elementary teachers vs. elementary principals; secondary teachers vs. secondary principals; teachers/all vs. administrators/all. Five survey items were pulled out for individual analysis using the same procedure because the specific answers to these items were of particular interest to the Commission.

The rank ordering of the areas of concern, Part IV of the survey, where each item was assigned a ranking, 1 through 10, was analyzed by calculating the mean for each item by group and ranking them based on these group means. A ranking for the combined groups was then calculated to look at the overall ranking.

A separate analysis was done on the comments and a word-table was prepared with the themes that emerged. This analysis included an identification of the major themes a categorical sort of the comments into themes with a cross check for verification; and the selection of quotes reflecting the theme with representative

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comments to illustrate each area. These are presented in the section "Specific Findings for Special Education Teachers."

Results

The results of the survey are presented across all the groups and then with specific attention to the special education teacher.

Survey Return Rates

The return rate of 37% for the survey was acceptable for a randomly selected group of recipients. The usable return rate was 34% with 538 surveys included in the analysis. Surveys with problems (e.g., multiple responses for the same items, unclear responses, or questions that had been changed substantially prior to response) were eliminated from the analysis. Surveys that had been photocopied and returned were not included, as these could not be accurately coded by respondent. The breakdown of return by groups showed that the special education teachers had the highest return (66%), followed by special education administrators (40%), principals (20%), and finally by the general education teachers (18%). Table 1 shows the return rates, by group.

Table 1
CEC Conditions of Teaching Survey Return Rate
And Number/Percentage of Surveys Used in Analysis

Population Category	Number of Surveys Sent	Surveys Returned per Population	Surveys Used in Analysis
Special Education Administrators	400	158 (40%)	139 (35%)
Special Education Teachers	400	246 (66%)	225 (64%)
Principals	400	110 (30%)	107 (27%)
General Education Teachers	400	72 (18%)	67 (17%)
Totals	1,600	586 (37%)	538 (34%)

Major problems emerged with the parent data during the review and data clean up of the returned surveys. A large number (15%) of the parents indicated that they could not respond to several items in the survey because their "child" with disabilities was now an adult and no longer in school. Several parent respondents (10%) indicated that they serve as para professionals and have worked with exceptional children for years, having initially become interested because of their child's disability. Some parents indicated that they were unable to respond to the

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questions because they did not have adequate information about their child's school and teachers. The questions pertaining to collegiality/professionalism and specific use of time were most problematic for parents. This meant that even for the "usable" returned surveys, the amount of missing data posed problems for the overall analysis.

As a result of these difficulties with the sampling and the survey construction, the decision was made to remove the parent data from the contrast with group analysis.

Demographics of Respondents

The respondents were fairly evenly balanced across geographical regions and represented urban (25%), suburban (33%), small town (22%), and rural (20%) settings (see Figure 2). The educational levels of the respondents ranged from undergraduate degrees through doctoral degrees. Seventeen percent reported an undergraduate degree as the highest degree attained, 60% reported a masters degree, 18% an educational specialist degree, and 6% a terminal, doctoral degree (See Figure 3).

Respondents' ages varied, with the majority falling between 30 and 60 years old. There was little racial diversity represented in the respondent sample, the largest number of respondents by far were Caucasian, followed by African American, Latino, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Other.

The gender of our respondents also represented the field of education, with the overwhelming majority being female. Thus, the population represented is by and large middle aged, Caucasian, and female. This group continues to be the predominant group in education. Table 2 shows the age, ethnicity, and gender representation of the respondent group.

Table 2: Demographics of CEC Conditions Survey Respondents by Age, Ethnicity and Gender*

Participant Group	Age (%)					Ethnicity (%)						Gender (%)	
	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	>60	African American	American Indian	Asian Pacific	Caucasian	Latino	Other	Female	Male
Special Education Teachers	2	10	47	36	6	2	0	< 1	96	< 1	1	91	9
Special Education Administrators	1	10	38	44	7	4	< 1	0	95	0	0	80	20
Elementary Classroom Teachers	37	23	22	14	4	11	7	0	78	4	0	96	4
Secondary Classroom Teachers	28	18	18	35	3	5	0	5	90	0	0	59	41
Elementary Principals	0	10	39	48	2	4	2	0	94	0	0	76	24
Secondary Principals	0	14	42	43	2	3	2	0	93	2	0	26	74

*Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

The respondents reported their years of teaching in both general and special education and their years of service as principals. Table 3 shows the years with a breakdown by group. The special education teachers reported the number of years they had special education assignments and the number of years during which their primary responsibility was to work within the general educational setting to meet students' needs. The majority of special education teachers reported between 11 to 30 years in special education and 1 to 30 years in general education.

The special education administrators reported their teaching background for both general and special education as well. The majority of special education administrators reported 11 to 30 years in special education and 1 to 30 years in general education. The majority of elementary and secondary classroom teachers reported their number of years in general education as between 1 and 10 and the same number of years teaching students with exceptionalities.

The large majority of general education teachers reported having students with exceptionalities in their classes; the comments that accompanied the surveys indicated that this trend had increased in recent years. The special education teachers likewise indicated that they are working to meet the needs of their students within the general education setting. The majority of principals, both elementary and

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secondary, reported 1 to 10 years as a principal, with 11 to 20 years being the next highest group.

Table 3a: CEC Conditions Survey Respondents'
Years of Experience Teaching General & Special Education*
(N = 431)

Participant Group	Years in General Education Teaching (%)					Special Education Teaching (%)				
	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	40+	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	40+
Special Education Teachers	39	24	30	5	2	9	42	45	4	0
Special Education Administrators	50	18	26	4	1	9	39	49	3	0
Elementary Classroom Teachers	68	16	12	4	4	50	38	0	13	0
Secondary Classroom Teachers	58	17	17	9	0	75	20	5	0	0

Table 3b
Years as Principal
(N = 107)

	Years as Principal (%)				
	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	40+
Elementary Principals	55	30	13	2	0
Secondary Principals	66	14	6	5	0

* See Years in Administration

The final set of background information reported by our respondents was on areas of educational licensing. We asked for information on grade level, content area, special education/related services, and licenses. Tables 4, 5, and 6 show the breakdown of the groups with their areas of license. The grade level licenses of the groups followed an expected pattern with the bulk of the special educators licensed in multiple grade levels (see Table 4). The elementary and secondary general educators were licensed in their grade level and also had multiple grade level license areas. This range may reflect the impact of states that offer multi-grade - level licenses spanning elementary-middle school, and middle school-high school.

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Table 4: Percentage of CEC Conditions Survey Respondents'
Licensed in Each Grade Level*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	Early Childhood (%)	Elementary Education (%)	Middle Grades Education (%)	High School Education (%)
Special Education Teachers	18	76	50	40
Special Education Administrators	28	65	47	38
Elementary Classroom Teachers	22	93	44	19
Secondary Classroom Teachers	8	43	31	75
Elementary Principals	29	90	60	38
Secondary Principals	2	25	54	88

* The rows do not add up to 100, as many individuals have multiple licenses.

The content area licenses, Table 5, reflect the differences between general and special as well as the differences between elementary and secondary education license programs. The elementary teachers are given a general license to teach all content areas, but some report additional content-area-specific licenses in language arts or social studies. The elementary principals were also more likely to have language arts or social studies concentrations. The secondary teachers and principals reflected a fairly even spread of content areas. The special educators reported a relatively low percentage of content area licenses with 11% licensed in language arts, 4% in math, 5% in science, 11% in social studies, and 4% in vocational education.

The final question regarding licensed areas dealt with special education licenses. Here again the results followed some expected patterns (see Table 6). The special educators were more likely to report licenses in specific areas of exceptionalities than were the general educators, and the highest percentages of reported licenses for all groups was in learning disabilities followed by mental retardation and then emotional and behavioral disorders. Twenty-eight percent of the special education teachers reported "cross-categorical" licenses. Thirty percent

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of the general education secondary teachers, 19% of elementary teachers, and 21% of elementary principals reported additional license areas for learning disabilities. The elementary teachers (22%) and secondary teachers (26%) also reported licenses in mental retardation.

Table 5: Percentage of CEC Conditions Survey Respondents'
Licensed in Content Areas
(N = 538)

Participant Group	Language Arts* (%)	Math* (%)	Science* (%)	Social Sciences* (%)	Vocational Education* (%)
Special Education Teachers	11	4	5	11	4
Special Education Administrators	13	3	3	13	6
Elementary Classroom Teachers**	7	0	0	7	0
Secondary Classroom Teachers	33	20	23	18	10
Elementary Principals	23	6	8	19	0
Secondary Principals	32	11	14	32	14

*   The rows do not add up to 100%, as many individuals have multiple licenses.
**   Special content area licenses are primarily seen in middle and high school faculty.

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Table 6: Percentage of CEC Conditions Survey Respondents Licensed in Special Education & Related Areas*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	Counsel-ing (%)	VI (%)	HI (%)	SED (%)	SLD (%)	MR/ DD (%)	PH (%)	Cross Cate-gorical (%)	G&T (%)
Special Education Teachers	3	5	4	48	68	62	22	28	7
Special Education Administrators	11	6	2	50	59	54	14	30	11
Elementary Classroom Teachers	0	0	0	7	19	22	4	0	0
Secondary Classroom Teachers	5	3	3	18	30	26	13	8	5
Elementary Principals	6	2	0	15	21	15	6	2	15
Secondary Principals	14	0	0	2	5	9	7	4	2

* The rows do not add up to 100%, as many individuals have multiple licenses.

Respondents were asked to identify the types of exceptional students they had been responsible for teaching over the years (see table 7). The most prevalent area of exceptionality for all groups was learning disability, with emotional and behavioral disorders being the next highest. The elementary teachers (53%) and the secondary teachers (81%) indicated that students with learning disabilities were included in their classes. Students with emotional/behavioral disorders were the next largest group with 40% of the elementary and 59% of the secondary teachers reporting responsibilities for these students. The general educators reported having had responsibility for students in all areas of exceptionality.

Table 7: CEC Conditions Survey Respondents' Areas of Exceptionality
Included in Teaching/Administrative Responsibility
(Have Taught or Are Teaching)
(N = 538)

Participant Group	VI (%)	HI (%)	SED (%)	SLD (%)	MR/ DD (%)	PH (%)	Cross Cate- gorical (%)	Other (%)	G&T (%)
Special Education Teachers	10	9	50	69	56	31	20	9	5
Special Education Administrators	17	17	64	7	62	36	32	17	12
Elementary Classroom Teachers	13	13	40	53	33	13	13	27	27
Secondary Classroom Teachers	9	19	59	81	28	13	16	3	41
Elementary Principals	3	26	80	91	69	51	29	14	51
Secondary Principals	41	34	66	98	57	59	30	0	51

Table 8 gives t he current grade level assignments of the special education teachers and the grade level responsibilities for special education administrators. The responses reflect the multiple grades served by the respondents. Special education teachers' caseloads had an average range of 4 grade levels. The special educator-administrators' grade level assignment reflected the same wide range of grades; the average grade span, however, was between 7 or 8 grade levels with many administrators reporting responsibility for pre-k through 12th grade. Data for the general education teachers' and principals' specific grade levels was not collected as the sampling procedure had already identified elementary and secondary groups.

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Table 8: CEC Conditions Survey Special Education Respondents' Current Teaching or Administrative Assignments by Grade Level*
(N = 538)

Partici-pant Group	Pre K %	K %	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	7 %	8 %	9 %)	10 %	11 %	12 %	12 + %
Special Education Teachers	10	28	29	33	35	36	32	28	25	25	30	29	29	27	5
Special Education Administra-tors	27	38	40	43	41	41	4	39	40	38	4	42	40	41	8

- Percentages do not add up to 100%, as special educators serve multiple grade levels.

Access to Related Services

One of the key variables that influences the conditions of teaching students with exceptionalities is the ability to provide broad-based support to meet their needs. We asked each respondent to check the related services to which students with exceptional needs in their class, school, or school system had access. Table 9 gives the percentage of respondents from each group who indicated that their students have access to each of the services. Speech language therapy, school counseling, school psychological support, occupational therapy, and physical therapy were reported as being available by the most respondents. Social work, medical support, and family counseling were the next highest cluster with art and music therapies reported as available by only a few respondents.

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Table 9: CEC Conditions Survey Respondents' Reported Access
to Related Service Providers for Their Students with Exceptionalities
(N = 538)

Participant Group	Occupational Therapy (%)	Physical Therapy (%)	Speech/ Lang. (%)	Medical Support (%)	School Counselor (%)	School Psychology (%)	Social Work (%)	Family Counselor (%)	Art Therapy (%)	Music Therapy (%)	Other (%)
Special Education Teachers	72	66	93	31	67	76	47	11	3	4	4
Special Education Administrators	86	81	97	45	73	75	66	23	11	15	10
Elementary Classroom Teachers	46	33	88	29	71	46	54	17	4	8	8
Secondary Classroom Teachers	23	28	51	44	87	59	46	10	3	0	5
Elementary Principals	77	73	98	48	83	75	44	17	2	4	2
Secondary Principals	53	47	93	54	91	81	49	23	2	2	5

Access to Appropriate Materials

The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree) with several items related to the availability of materials to work with students with exceptionalities. The Cronbach's alpha, measuring internal consistency for the items on this scale, was .89 thus items were clustered to look at the overall response. All the groups reported that materials to work with students with exceptionalities were available; however, the intensity of their agreement differed by groups. Figure 4 shows the specific level of agreement for each group.

The contrasts for the groups revealed two significant differences; both at the .00 level. The combined administrators (principals with special education

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administrators) in contrast to the combined teachers (both special and general education teachers) was the first significant contrast. The combined elementary and secondary teachers in contrast to elementary and secondary principals was the second significant contrast. In both these cases the administrators were significantly more favorable as to the availability of materials than the teachers were. The teachers indicated moderate agreement (2.31-2.60) and administrators reported stronger agreement (2.43-3.16). There were no significant differences in the contrast between special and general educators on the materials available to meet the needs of exceptional students.

Two individual items on this scale were pulled out for a separate analysis because they were of particular interest to the Commission: the availability of computer software for record keeping, a major concern for coping with paperwork demands, and access to the district's general education curriculum guidelines to work with students with exceptionalities. On the first item, availability of software for record keeping, the contrasts mirrored those of the total scale with the significant differences being between administrators and teachers. This was true for both all administrators contrasted with all teachers and for the general education principals contrasted with general education teachers. The significance level reached was .00 on both of these contrasts. Again, the administrators were significantly more positive than the teachers in their agreement that record-keeping software is available. Special education teachers were the only group that fell in the "disagree" range on the availability of software. No significant difference was found on the contrast for general with special educators. Figure 5 shows the specific responses on this item by group. All groups agreed that they have access to curriculum guidelines and there were no significant difference between the groups. Figure 6 reports the specific responses for each group.

Appropriateness of Physical Facilities

The physical facilities section asked respondents to rate on an "agree-disagree" likert scale the appropriateness of physical facilities for students with exceptionalities. The internal consistency for the items was .87 using a Cronbach's Alpha test. This allowed us to cluster the items to look at an overall response by groups. The respondents indicate that the physical facilities are appropriate for students with exceptionalities with a moderate agreement from each group ranging from 2.92-3.29. The only contrast that showed a significant difference (.00) was for secondary teachers contrasted with secondary principals. The principals gave a more favorable rating than the teachers. There were no differences in the contrasts

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between all administrators and all teachers or between special and general educators' views. Figure 7 shows the specific response for each group. No individual items were pulled out of this scale for separate analysis.

Collegiality and Professionalism

The section on collegiality and professionalism asked respondents to rate their general satisfaction on items using a five point likert scale (1 = Unsatisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Very Satisfactory, 5 = Excellent). The Cronbach's Alpha (.92) done to check for internal consistency allowed us to cluster the items to look at an overall response by group. The groups indicated that they were basically satisfied with the collegiality and professionalism, with the individual group responses ranging from 2.99 through 3.82. The only differences in the groups were differences in the intensity of their reported satisfaction levels. The significant contrasts were those between all administrators and all teachers (.00) and between the general education administrators and classroom teachers (.00). In both cases, the administrators reported higher levels of satisfaction than the teachers did. Again, although these contrasts reached significance, the difference is in the intensity of satisfaction level, not in whether the groups are satisfied. See Figure 8 for specific responses by group.

Three individual items were analyzed separately: pre-service preparation to meet exceptional students' needs; professional development opportunities; and sense of physical safety in working with students with exceptionalities. The secondary (2.24) and elementary (2.71) teachers indicated the lowest satisfaction levels with their pre-service preparation to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities. These ratings both fell in the "needs improvement" range. The contrasts that were significant between groups were the all administrators in contrast with all teachers and the general education teachers in contrast with the principals. In both cases the administrators were more satisfied with pre-service preparation to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities than the teachers were. Figure 9 shows responses to satisfaction with pre-service preparation by groups.

Professional development opportunities to learn about meeting the needs of students with exceptionalities were rated as "needs improvement" by all the teachers (both general and special education). The administrators, however, all indicated satisfaction with the opportunities available. The significant contrasts (.00) were those between all administrators and all teachers, and between general education administrators and teachers. In this case the differences between administrators and teachers was more dramatic as it was across the "needs improvement" and the

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"satisfied" ranges, with teachers indicating "needs improvement" and administrators indicating satisfaction. See Figure 10 for specific responses by group.

The third individual item analyzed in this section was a sense of physical safety in working with students with exceptionalities. While all groups reported basic satisfaction with their sense of physical safety, there were significant differences by group. The secondary teachers indicated the lowest satisfaction level (3.08) with the elementary principals giving the highest (4.11). The contrasts of all administrators with all teachers was significant (.00) with the administrators reporting higher levels of satisfaction than the teachers. Figure 11 shows the responses by group.

Communication Regarding Students with Exceptionalities
In this section respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with communication regarding the needs of students with exceptionalities. The test for internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha, was .89, which allowed us to cluster the items for analysis. The secondary teachers (2.47), followed by the special education teachers (2.67), and the elementary teachers (2.78) all indicate that this area needs improvement. The administrators, on the other hand, were more satisfied than the teachers were. The special education administrators (2.97) gave the lowest rating for the administrators, followed by the secondary principals (3.34) and the elementary principals (3.55). Figure 12 shows the specific responses by group.

The group contrasts followed the early patterns with the significant differences (.00) occurring in the contrast between all administrators and all teachers, and between general education administrators and teachers. These differences were not just in degree — the teachers indicate that communication patterns need improvement while the administrators indicate basic satisfaction with the communication. One item from this section was pulled out for separate analysis: the availability of common planning time when special and general education teachers can meet.

Responses to the item that looked at common planning time mirrored those of the overall scale, with teachers indicating that they are not satisfied with the amount of common planning time and the general education administrators indicating that it is satisfactory. The special education administrators' response, however, was more similar to the teachers — that the amount of planning time "needs improvement." The significant contrasts (.00) were those between all administrators and all teachers, and those between general education administrators and teachers. See Figure 13 for specific responses by group.
Use of Educators' Time

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The respondents were asked to estimate the percentages of time they currently spend each week on various tasks related to meeting the needs of children with exceptionalities. The major tasks included time spent on paperwork for identification and IEPs; meetings with other educators and/or parents; curriculum and instructional materials planning; and collegial planning for the instruction of children with exceptional learning needs.

Paperwork Table 10 shows the percentage of time the respondents estimated they spend on paperwork related to exceptional students. The majority of respondents for each group indicated that they spend between 10% and 20% of their time (4 to 8 hours) per week on paperwork related to children with exceptionalities. The special education teachers and administrators, as well as the general education administrators, reported in large numbers that they spend between 21% and 30% of their time (8 to 12 hours) on paperwork. Classroom teachers' next highest cluster of responses indicated that "no time" was spent on paperwork related to students with exceptionalities.

Table 10: CEC Survey Respondents' Percentage of Time Spent
On Paperwork Related to Identifying Students and Developing IEPs*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	No Time Spent	10 - 20%**	21 - 30%	31 - 40%	41 - 50%	50%+
Special Education Teachers (%)	3	32	30	13	10	12
Special Education Administrators (%)	4	36	28	19	7	7
Elementary Class-room Teachers (%)	48	37	11	4	0	0
Secondary Classroom Teachers (%)	35	38	13	8	5	3
Elementary Principals (%)	6	45	32	9	2	6
Secondary Principals (%)	7	44	26	12	5	5

*   Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

**   Note that in a 40-hour work week, this would mean between 4 - 8 hours, a half to a full day, is spent on paperwork.

Meetings The second question on use of time dealt with the estimated percentage of time respondents spend per week in meetings related to IEPs. Again, the largest cluster of responses for all groups was between 10% and 20% of their time (4 to 8 hours), with a similar pattern showing that special educators' and administrators' second highest cluster was 21 - 30% (8 to 12 hours) and classroom teachers' second highest cluster was "no time spent." Table 11 shows the breakdown by groups for estimated time spent in meetings.

Table 11: CEC Survey Respondents' Percentage of Time
in Meetings Relating to IEPs*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	No Time Spent	10 - 20%	21 - 30%	31 - 40%	41 - 50%	50%+
Special Education Teachers (%)	5	58	25	9	1	3
Special Education Administrators (%)	3	61	26	7	1	1
Elementary Class-room Teachers (%)	44	41	11	4	0	0
Secondary Classroom Teachers (%)	38	40	20	3	0	0
Elementary Principals (%)	6	52	27	8	0	6
Secondary Principals (%)	5	60	21	12	2	0

* Percentages represented in each category may not add up to
100% due to rounding errors.

Curriculum Planning Respondents were also asked to estimate the percentage of their time, per week, spent on curriculum planning for students with exceptional learning needs. All groups clustered at the 10 - 20% response with the next highest, or equally high, cluster being 21 - 30%. The classroom teachers reported an equal number of "no time spent" at 21 - 30%. Table 12 shows the specific responses by group.

Participant Group	No Time Spent	10 - 20%	21 - 30%	31 - 40%	41 - 50%	50%+
Special Education Teachers (%)	4	33	27	15	12	9
Special Education Administrators (%)	8	45	24	12	7	4
Elementary Class- room Teachers (%)	26	33	26	11	0	4
Secondary Classroom Teachers (%)	23	31	23	8	3	13
Elementary Principals (%)	4	55	26	11	4	0
Secondary Principals (%)	4	63	20	5	7	2

- Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

Collaboration The final question regarding percentage of time spent on tasks related to exceptional students asked respondents to estimate the time they spend collaborating with other teachers in planning to meet student needs. Once again the responses clustered for all groups in the 10 - 20% time rate. The range of responses was greater for this item, however, with almost equal numbers indicating "no time spent" as indicating 20 - 30%. This pattern of responses is shown in Table 13.

Table 13: CEC Survey Respondents' Percentage of Time Spent
Planning with Other Teachers*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	No Time Spent	10 - 20%	20 - 30%	30 - 40%	40 - 50%	50%+
Special Education Teachers (%)	16	67	11	5	<1	1
Special Education Administrators (%)	13	70	14	3	0	0
Elementary Class-room Teachers (%)	52	30	15	4	0	0
Secondary Class-Room Teachers (%)	38	56	5	0	0	0
Elementary Principals (%)	4	87	6	2	0	0
Secondary Principals (%)	9	67	12	10	0	2

*   Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100%
   due to rounding errors.

Average Length of IEPs

   To help understand the issues teachers face in meeting the needs of children
with exceptionalities, we asked respondents the average length of the IEPs they
develop for children with exceptionalities. While the majority of respondents
indicated that their IEPs average between 1 and 10 pages, over a third of the special
education teachers said IEPs are between 11 and 20 pages long. Table 14 shows
the respondents by group.

Table 14: CEC Survey Respondents' Average Length of an IEP in Pages Based on Educator's Caseload*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	1 – 10 Pages	11 - 20 Pages	21 – 30 Pages	31 - 40 Pages	41 - 50 Pages	50+ Pages
Special Education Teachers (%)	62	35	2	0	0	0
Special Education Administrators (%)	69	27	4	1	0	0
Elementary Class- room Teachers (%)	93	7	0	0	0	0
Secondary Class-room Teachers (%)	69	28	0	0	3	0
Elementary Principals (%)	80	13	7	0	0	0
Secondary Principals (%)	80	11	9	0	0	0

- Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

Teaching Time with Individual Students

The needs of exceptional students may require one-on-one instruction and so we asked respondents to estimate the number of hours they spend per week providing individualized direct instruction to students. The highest cluster of responses for all groups was that less than one hour per week is spent working one-on-one with students. Almost a third of elementary and secondary classroom teachers reported that they spend "no time" in one-on-one instruction of students with exceptionalities. This was also true for 15% of special education teachers who reported that they spend "no time" in one-on-one instruction. Table 15 shows these responses by group.

Table 15: CEC Survey Respondents' Number of Hours per Week Spent
on Individualized (1:1) Instruction of Exceptional Children*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	No Time Spent	< 1 Hour	1-2 Hours	2-3 Hours	3-4 Hours	4-5 Hours	>5 Hours
Special Education Teachers (%)	15	31	22	10	3	6	13
Special Education Administrator (%)	6	37	23	12	1	9	11
Elementary Class-room Teachers (%)	31	27	8	8	8	8	12
Secondary Classroom Teachers (%)	30	35	18	3	3	0	13
Elementary Principals (%)	9	22	30	20	4	2	13
Secondary Principals (%)	4	21	37	11	7	12	9

- Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

Time Spent Collaborating with Colleagues

The increasing trend toward serving students with exceptionalities in the general education program should logically be mirrored by an increase in collaboration across general and special education. We asked respondents to estimate the number of hours they spend collaborating with colleagues to address the needs of exceptional students; the majority reported that they spend less than one hour per week. Twenty-three percent of special education teachers reported that they spend no time in collaboration, while 38% and 31% of classroom teachers reported "no time spent." The administrators reported more time was being spent on collaboration than the teachers reported. Table 16 shows the responses by group.

Table 16: CEC Survey Respondents' Number of Hours per Week Spent
Collaborating with Colleagues*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	No Time Spent	< 1 Hour	1-2 Hours	2-3 Hours	3-4 Hours	4-5 Hours	>5 Hours
Special Education Teachers (%)	23	39	11	9	4	6	9
Special Education Administrators (%)	8	36	27	13	5	5	6
Elementary Class- room Teachers (%)	38	33	4	0	8	0	17
Secondary Classroom Teachers (%)	31	38	3	5	3	15	5
Elementary Principals (%)	2	20	31	18	4	13	11
Secondary Principals (%)	5	39	26	11	0	14	5

* Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100%
due to rounding errors.

Adult to Student Ratios

The teaching conditions for meeting the needs of students with exceptionalities is in part dependent on the adult-to-student ratio. Respondents were asked to report the teacher:student ratio and the paraprofessional:student ratio for students with exceptional needs. The question asked respondents to indicate their own ratio, for their class, or in the case of school and school system their estimate of the ratios across teachers. Table 17 shows the variability of responses to the teacher:student ratios. Special education teachers' responses clustered in the 1:10 and 1:15 teacher:student range. The classroom teachers report having a 1:5 or 1:10 ratio of teacher to exceptional students within their classes (this ratio did not account for the other students in the same class). The wide range of responses received reflects differences in the setting for service delivery.

Table 17: CEC Survey Respondents' Teacher:Student Ratio*
N = 538)

Participant Group	1:1	1:5	1:10	1:15	1:20	1:25	1:30	1:31+
Special Education Teachers (%)	0	10	27	24	12	12	4	11
Special Education Administrators (%)	0	16	23	25	15	15	3	4
Elementary Class-room Teachers (%)	0	44	17	11	6	11	6	6
Secondary Classroom Teachers (%)	0	28	28	14	11	11	8	0
Elementary Principals (%)	0	7	24	30	20	11	2	7
Secondary Principals (%)	0	9	34	30	21	2	0	4

● Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

The paraprofessional:student ratio was in sharp contrast to the teacher:student ratio, with the majority of classroom teachers indicating that they have no paraprofessional support. Special educators indicated they have a 1:5-1:10 ratio of paraprofessionals to students. Table 18 shows the specific responses by group for this question.

Table 18: CEC Survey Respondents' Paraprofessional:Exceptional
Student Ratio*
(N = 538)

Participant Group	No Para	1:5	1:10	1:15	1:20	1:25	1:30	1:31+
Special Education Teachers (%)	24	30	18	11	7	3	2	6
Special Education Administrators (%)	24	26	17	14	8	4	1	6
Elementary Class-room Teachers (%)	44	38	0	13	0	0	0	6
Secondary Classroom Teachers (%)	45	15	5	0	10	5	5	15
Elementary Principals (%)	21	21	26	13	13	3	0	5
Secondary Principals (%)	29	22	20	17	7	0	0	5

- Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

Satisfaction with Work

Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with work from not satisfied to very satisfied. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their work. The teachers had higher reports of not satisfied than did the administrators with special education (23%), elementary (21%), and secondary (28%) reporting not satisfied. Only 13% of special education administrators and less than 10% of principals indicated that they are not satisfied with their work. Table 19 gives the satisfaction levels by group.

Table 19: CEC Survey Respondents' Level of Satisfaction with Their Work*
(N = 538)

Group	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Special Education Teachers %	23	53	24
Special Education Administrators %	13	50	37
Elementary Class-room Teachers (%)	21	42	38
Secondary Classroom Teachers (%)	28	46	26
Elementary Principals (%)	9	46	46
Secondary Principles (%)	5	57	36

* Percentages represented in each category may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

Ranking of Concerns

The final section of the survey requested that participants rank-order 10 areas of concern regarding conditions for teaching students with exceptionalities. The list of concerns was drawn from the literature review, the web-survey, the focus groups, and the Commission's discussions. The areas included were: caseload, planning time, paperwork, instructional materials, administrative support, needed technology, inservice (staff development), recruitment and retention of special education teachers, quality of preservice preparation, and issues related to state licensing. Each group's ranking is presented in Figure 14. All groups ranked the issue of caseload as one of the top three areas of concern. Planning time fell in the top three concerns for four out of the six groups and the instructional materials category was considered in the top three for three groups. Recruitment and retention of special

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education teachers and paperwork were ranked in the top three by two groups. One group, elementary teachers, included administrative support as one of the top three areas of concern.

The areas which were consistently ranked last by the groups were issues related to state licensing (ranked last by all groups), quality of preservice preparation (ranked next to last by five out of the six groups), and the need for technology (ranked as the eighth concern by three out of the six groups). The area of recruitment and retention of special education teachers was ranked eight by two groups. A closer look at the rankings of special education teachers is presented in the section devoted to findings for special education teachers.

The group rank-orders were combined to give the overall ranking of concern regarding the conditions for teaching students with exceptional learning needs as shown in Figure 15. This overall ranking placed caseload, availability of instructional materials, and planning time as the top three concerns, respectively. The three areas that were last were technology needed, quality of preservice, and state licensing programs.

Summary of Findings

The respondents mirrored the current demographics of educators being predominately white females age 30 to 50 years. The elementary teacher respondents were the youngest and the administrators were the oldest groups. The responses, by and large, followed a pattern by groups. There were no significant differences found in the special education vs. general education contrasts. The major differences across groups were found in the contrast of administrators with teachers. The administrators, on the whole, took a more positive view of the conditions for teaching students with exceptionalities than the teachers did. The areas where these differences were most extreme included availability of materials to work with students (especially software), preservice preparation to meet the needs of exceptional students, professional development opportunities, sense of physical safety when working with students with exceptionalities, communication regarding student's needs, and amount of planning time.

Discussion

Administrator vs. Teacher Perspectives

The findings from this survey indicate that teacher perspectives are similar for both general and special educators and that administrators' views are also parallel.

The similarities across special and general education groups combined with the significant differences between all teacher and all administrator points of view was interesting. The viewpoint taken by teachers regarding the conditions they work under while teaching students with exceptionalities is harsher than the view offered by the administrators. This pattern was pervasive on all the areas of contrast (materials available, physical facilities for teaching, collegiality and professionalism, pre-service preparation, professional development opportunities, and planning time). These differences also were reflected in the literature on teaching conditions. One of the most frequently cited reasons for special educators leaving the field is the lack of administrators' support, and the lack of administrators' understanding of what teachers are doing (Billingsley, 1991). The feelings that administrators are "out of touch" with what teachers have to do, and do not understand the problems that teachers face, undermine teacher motivation and morale (Kozleski, et al., 1999). This failure to connect between teacher and administrator continues to be an area of concern.

Personnel Preparation

General education teachers report that they have students with exceptional learning needs in their classes. While they report that they have had, or currently have, responsibilities for students in all areas of exceptionalities, they indicated that the largest group they work with is students with learning disabilities. The growing trend toward inclusion combined with the reported dissatisfaction with teacher preservice preparation and the lack of professional development opportunities "on the job," to equip teachers to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities, reveals a serious problem. The area where the greatest number of general classroom teachers reported having an additional license was in learning disabilities (19% of elementary teachers and 30% of the secondary teachers). These numbers, while impressive, do not alleviate the concern that general education teachers feel under-prepared to meet the needs of exceptional learners (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

The problems with teacher preparation to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities are not limited to issues related to general education. The special educators report few additional licenses in content areas, and limited additional support for their role as collaborative teachers. The increased emphasis on curriculum access and success for students with exceptionalities means that special educators will have to strengthen their content knowledge to support appropriate differentiation strategies. The growing trend toward inclusion means that special

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education teachers also need new and different skills to work collegially with general education teachers. Special education teachers also report being dissatisfied with professional development opportunities in which to learn the new skills needed to fulfill changing role expectations.

In spite of the clear need to improve personnel preparation, this was ranked ninth out of 10 areas of concern by all of the groups. The day-to-day operations of schooling (caseloads, planning time, instructional materials, paperwork, etc.) are the primary concern of practitioners, leaving the big picture issues (personnel preparation, teacher recruitment and retention, and state licensing issues) to others. Yet, if the conditions for teaching students with exceptional learning needs are to improve these issues must be addressed. The role of state, higher education, and federal leadership is critical to improving preservice and inservice personnel preparation for both general and special educators. The better prepared that teachers feel to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities, the more likely it is that they will continue to teach (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Brownell & Smith, 1992; Kozleski et al., 1999).

Recruitment and Retention of Special Education Teachers

Kozleski and her colleagues remind us that "in 1995-96, more than 28,000 fulltime equivalent special education teachers were not fully certified for the positions they held," (1999, p. 19). This, combined with the numbers of special education teachers leaving the field and the reduction of new teachers entering special education, point to a growing teacher shortage (Gallagher & Coleman, 1999). While our teacher sample by and large reported that they are satisfied with their work, they identified numerous problems with the overall conditions for teaching students with exceptionalities, which undermine morale. Again, the leadership to tackle these issues must come from the state and national levels. Issues related to how special education teachers are licensed across states, how teacher preparation programs recruit preservice special education teachers, and how new teachers are supported on the job must be addressed with innovative solutions.

Changes and Challenges

Perhaps the most telling message from the survey is that the roles for teachers who work with students with exceptionalities are changing and little is being done systemically to address these changes. This is true for both general and special educators.

- General education teachers report working with students with exceptionalities in their classrooms, yet time for collaboration and planning between general and special educators is almost non-existent
- Teachers report feeling inadequately prepared to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities (U.S. Department of Education, 1999), yet personnel preparation opportunities are limited and teacher preparation institutions continue to produce new teachers who are not prepared.
- Paperwork is overwhelming special education teachers, yet they are the last ones to receive computer software for record keeping.
- Special education teachers are expected to work with general educators collaboratively, yet their pre-service programs are not preparing them for these new roles (Kozleski, 1999).
- Students with exceptionalities are expected to master more of the general education curriculum — at higher levels — than ever before, yet most special educators report little content area preparation to support their students
- The range and intensity of students' needs has increased in both general and special education classrooms, yet little has been done to increase support to meet student needs.

These issues are not simple and there is no simple solution. Creating optimal conditions for teaching students with exceptionalities — the conditions under which students with exceptionalities will be most successful — will take a concerted and coordinated effort across all stakeholders.

Specific Findings for Special Education Teachers

The primary focus of the Commission's charge was to address the improvement of teaching conditions for teachers of students with exceptionalities. The Commission included a broad base of stakeholders in its data collection and analysis, yet recognized the additional need for specific information on the conditions for special education teachers. This section focuses specifically on the voices of special education teachers and was drawn primarily from the analysis of comments provided. This summary of findings for special education teachers draws from all comments provided to the commission through a series of focus groups held nationally, two web-site questionnaires, and the national survey. Altogether over

1,500 special education teachers across the country contributed their voices to help make sure we got the message. Specific quotes were selected to illustrate each theme.

What are the current conditions under which special education teachers work?

Teaching is a complex, demanding job and there are many variables that impact a teacher's ability to be successful. The conditions of teaching children with exceptionalities are influenced by several major themes: a sense of collegiality and professionalism; an environment of open and frequent communication/collaboration; a climate of support; the availability of resources; and clarity of roles, responsibilities, and expectations for "doing the job successfully." These themes frame the context in which teachers work and impact directly both their ability to do the job well and their sense of job satisfaction.

In addition to the context in which a teacher works, a discussion of conditions must include specific aspects of the work itself. Issues related to caseload; class size and composition; paperwork; and time required for both teaching and non-instructional duties. All of this taken together helps us understand what teachers of exceptional children face on a daily basis as they work to meet the needs of their students.

What did they say?

When taken together the messages are loud and clear: teaching has gotten harder and the teachers who teach our children with exceptionalities are struggling to do their jobs well.

I'm finishing up the hardest year of 14 years.
For the first time I am seriously considering
leaving special education...

Collegiality and Professionalism

Special education teachers report feeling isolated from, and having few opportunities to collaborate with, other teachers. This sense of separation is often combined with a feeling of "powerlessness" to influence major decisions and policies that guide their work. This is a difficult combination for any teacher, but it is particularly detrimental when we recognize the intensity of student needs that special educators face. Because many of their students have persistent problems with

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learning, motivation, and behavior, special education teachers often begin to feel ineffective. Rather than fostering collegial support, this intensity of students' needs may in fact exacerbate the isolation of the special education teacher.

> The school staff, for the most part, resents the
> accommodations which they are asked to make
> for special needs students...

Given all of this, is it surprising that the morale of many special education teachers seems to have hit an all time low as they struggle to meet the ever-increasing demands of their students?

> A complete and total feeling of frustration
> for not being able to reasonably and
> effectively serve my children has plagued
> me since the beginning of December...

Communication and Collaboration

Logic would have it that the students with the most intense needs would receive the most intense forms of "team" planning, communication, and collaboration to meet these needs. For students with exceptionalities, however, this does not seem to be the case. Teachers in both general and special education report having little or no time to talk and plan collaboratively for their students with special needs. Lack of time to plan was rated as the second most important concern for special educators on a national survey. Special educators express the difficulty this creates.

> Although I deal with over 60 different teachers,
> there is little time during the day for collaboration
> with other staff members.

> ... there is little time, other than lunch,
> before and after school to regularly consult with
> or collaborate with my students' mainstream
> teachers. Often consultation or collaboration
> must depend on notes left in each other's boxes.

With an increasing number of students with special needs being served in the regular classroom with "consultative support" the demand for time to plan for student needs has grown. What other profession requires consultation, yet allocates little or not time for meetings. Figure 16 shows the hours per week that special educators report spending in collaborative instruction. Over a third (39%) report that they spend less than one hour per week in collaboration. An additional 11% report that they spend only between 1 and 2 hours in collaboration. When this is combined with the 23% who reported they do not spend any time in collaboration we can see that very little collaborative instruction time is reported.

> If consultation with the classroom teacher is
> to be used effectively, then there must be time
> built into the day for conferences.

The special educators also reported their time spent in planning with general education teachers (see Figure 17). This shows that well over half (67%) of the teachers report they spend between 10 and 20 percent of their time in collaborative planning. An additional 16% reported that they spend no time.

Administrative Support
District and building level support has been identified as a key component of teacher retention and job satisfaction. When this is working, what do teachers say?

> He is one of the most informed administrators
> I have had the pleasure to work with.
> He not only attends meetings, but makes it his job
> to know each student, their strengths and weaknesses,
> what classes they attend within regular and
> special settings, understands their needs, as well as
> the program's needs, knows their attendance,
> discipline and extra curricular accomplishments,
> participates fully within meetings, and makes sure that
> the program gets all the moneys needed
> to be successful.

However, when administrators lack the knowledge, time, or interest in children with special needs the impact is profound. Administrative support was ranked fifth (out of 10 items) as a major concern of special education teachers. Licensing for

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administrators rarely addresses adequate knowledge and skills to develop, supervise, and evaluate the delivery of special education and related services. This omission handicaps administrators faced with increasing numbers of students with exceptionalities.

Resources and Materials

No one can do their best if they are not given appropriate resources and materials. Special education teachers report that they often do not have what they need. In many schools, the special education program is the last on the list for books, instructional materials, classroom space, and equipment.

> ... I have a small narrow room, with one
> dry erase board and 15 desks. I do not
> have access to an overhead [projector].
> My schools' supply ran out before
> Special Ed. got their equipment.

To make up for some of these deficits, teachers regularly spend their own money on classroom supplies and materials. A group of 176 special education teachers indicated that $500.00 per year was their typical "out of pocket expense." While special education teachers do report that they have access to state and district curriculum guidelines, they indicate that they rarely have access to appropriate materials for each of their students, who are often well below grade level.

> The principal refuses to purchase reading
> curriculum material for my students...
> When given the option of purchasing
> [books] one grade level lower than the
> students' actual grade the answer is NO!

Clarity of Roles and Expectations

Special educators labor under difficult conditions in part because the field is changing rapidly. For many veteran teachers, the roles and responsibilities they were prepared to fill, and which they had been successful with in the past, have changed dramatically. New teachers are finding that their teacher preparation institutions "prepared" them for a job that no longer exists and left them ill-equipped

for the job they actually face. Combine this with multiple expectations and conflicting responsibilities and the job gets tougher.

> As special educators we wear many hats.
> We are required to be case managers,
> consultants, classroom teachers, secretaries,
> and disciplinarians...

> My frustration is trying to be "all things
> to all people". I am supposed to keep perfect
> paperwork, collaborate with regular education
> teachers, train and grade peer tutors,
> keep in constant contact with parents,
> and still find time to teach my students!

A reasonable response to the changing demands placed on teachers would be to provide intense and ongoing personnel preparation inservice to help teachers learn new knowledge and skills. Teachers report that this is not happening. They indicate that belonging to professional organizations is important, but that more is still needed in light of the current expectations.

Just as little has been done in the way of inservice, our preservice programs for education, where the next generation of teachers will come from, have not kept up. Frequently, special education programs operate outside of professional accreditation standards, and the programs face little in the way of consequences. When a program operates without professional accreditation, students do not have assurance they are receiving the validated knowledge and skills of the profession.

Caseload, Class Size, and Composition

Does it make sense when general education class sizes are smaller than special education caseloads? Can one teacher, even with a paraprofessional, be expected to teach multiple subjects, grade levels, and exceptionalities?

> In my classroom alone... I have fourteen students
> of such diverse
> exceptionalities and challenges...
> The class consists of 5 children with autism,
> 2 children who are (severely) emotionally disturbed,

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2 children who are orthopaedically impaired and
have learning disabilities,
2 children who are mentally retarded,
and 3 children with specific learning disabilities.

The overload of children this year has not been
so difficult as the variety of their disabilities...

Why is it that the students who need the most
direct teaching are getting the least?

Sixty-three percent of special education teachers reported that their class sizes often gave them a ratio of 15 or more students to one teacher (see Figure 18). Figure 19 shows that the paraprofessional-to-student ratios are a little better than the teacher-to-student ratios, with over a third of the teachers (37%) reporting a para:student ratio of one para to 10 or more students.

Caseload

The number one concern of special education teachers responding in a national survey was "caseload"! The answer is not, however, simple arithmetic. The number of students that is deemed a "manageable" caseload depends on age/grade ranges, types and severity of exceptionalities involved, content area expectations for the teacher, and level of support given to the teacher(s) responsible for meeting students' needs.

Teachers say that they are continually being asked to do more for more students with more diverse and intense needs, with less time, materials, and support. What we do know is that special educators across the country are leaving in recordhigh numbers and that those overwhelming caseloads is one of the top reasons given for this exodus.

Figure 20 shows the percentage of time special educators reported spending in meetings. The majority reported that they spend between 10 and 30 percent of their week (this is between 4 and 12 hours) working in identification - and IEP - related meetings.

Paperwork

No barrier is so irksome to special educators as the paperwork that keeps them from teaching. The overwhelming requirements of paperwork were ranked as

the third most important concern (out of a list of 10 issues) coming in just behind caseload and time for planning. While special educators understand the need for the IEP, both as an educational guide and a legal document, they struggle with all the time the process requires. The average length of typical IEPs was reported as being between 1 and 20 pages, with an estimated 4 hours of meeting/planning time going into each IEP parent conference. In addition to meetings, they report that a large percentage of their time is spent on completing paperwork (see Figure 21). Over a third of the teachers reported spending 20 to 40% of their time on paperwork with 22% reporting 40 to 50% of their time devoted to paperwork.

The IEP requirements must also be combined with other paperwork duties which frequently include forms for the central office; minutes of the collaborative team meetings; reports and evaluations of students referred but not placed; medical assistance billing forms; telephone logs; child abuse reports; due process documentation; quarterly progress reports; daily/weekly notes to parents concerning the child's progress; curriculum data reports; grade reports; discipline records; and other state, district, and school accountability requirements (see Figure 22). What makes it worse is the sense that much of the paperwork is designed to "keep the school system out of a lawsuit" rather than to improve the quality of the students' education (in the extensive list of paperwork, lesson plans, curriculum adaptation, and teacher-to-teacher notes on classroom practices were not included, yet all teachers complete these as well).

When is there time for IEPs and paperwork?
I find myself up until 10:00 and 11:00
at night doing IEPs.

Our IEPs are driven by numbers, not need!

I often stay after work until 7 or 8 to complete
paperwork and barely keep on top of it all
with all that extra time.

I don't know what the answer is, but the
students are the ones who suffer from all the mandated

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paperwork...

I wish that within my 26 years, one auditor
would have asked if my program was successful
rather then looking at the paperwork.

With all this paperwork the need for technology to manage it is acute, yet special education teachers report that they do not have access to appropriate computers and software. Few indicate that their IEPs and records are kept on computers, or that they have software to monitor students' progress. Special educators report that they are often the last ones in their schools to receive computers, and that they often get the "castoffs" when other systems are upgraded.

Something is wrong with this picture...

Most of us got into special education because
we wanted to teach, to work with kids, and it seems like
that aspect of the job is taking a back seat to the
administrative duties.

I love my job but feel that special ed.
students are getting short changed...

I thought special education was special
because children receive special attention.

There are many things wrong with the system
but we teachers are doing our best
to provide appropriate services to our students.

Our lawmakers should spend a day in the life of
a special educator...

We are, in fact, facing a crisis. Our country's proud claim that we educate all our children rings hollow when we hear the chorus of voices describing the current conditions under which our children with the most intense needs are served.

Figure 1: Sample Items from the Conditions of Teaching Study Survey
Parts I, II, III, and IV

Agree/Disagree (1 - 4 Scale)

Part I – Materials Available

- I have appropriate textbooks to meet the instructional levels of my students with exceptional needs.
- I have a variety of software to address the instructional needs of my students with exceptional needs.
- I have access to appropriate computers to support my instruction of students with exceptional needs.

Part II – Physical Facilities

- I have appropriate classroom space to accommodate my students with exceptional needs.
- My classroom is "barrier free" to allow for individuals with disabilities.
- My classroom is located in the main building of the school facility.

Satisfaction Level (1 - 5 Scale)

Part III – Collegiality/Professionalism

- Rate the professional development opportunities related to meeting the needs of exceptional students, with which you are provided.
- Rate the relationships among special education and general education teachers at your school.
- Rate the level of understanding regarding the responsibilities of special education teachers by the school site administration.

Part IV – Communication

- Rate the amount of time spent by the exceptional student's teacher and general education teachers in jointly planning to meet student needs.
- Rate the communication among school personnel regarding the needs of exceptional students.
- Rate the communication among educators and parents regarding the needs of exceptional students.

Urban
25%

Rural
20%

Small Town
22%

Suburban
33%
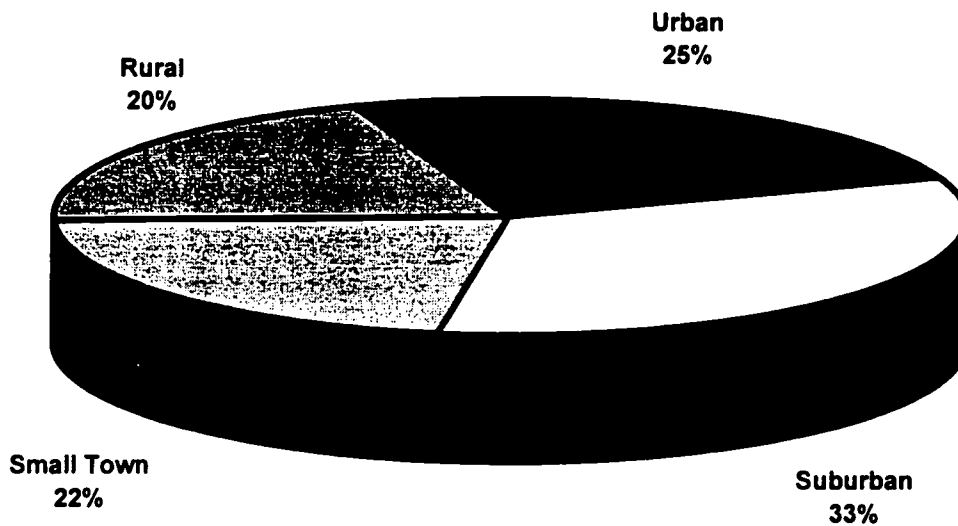
**Figure 2: Types of School Districts Represented in CEC
Conditions Survey Respondents
(N = 538)**

Masters
60%

Undergraduate
17%

Terminal Degree
(PhD, EDD)
6%

Educational
Specialist
18%
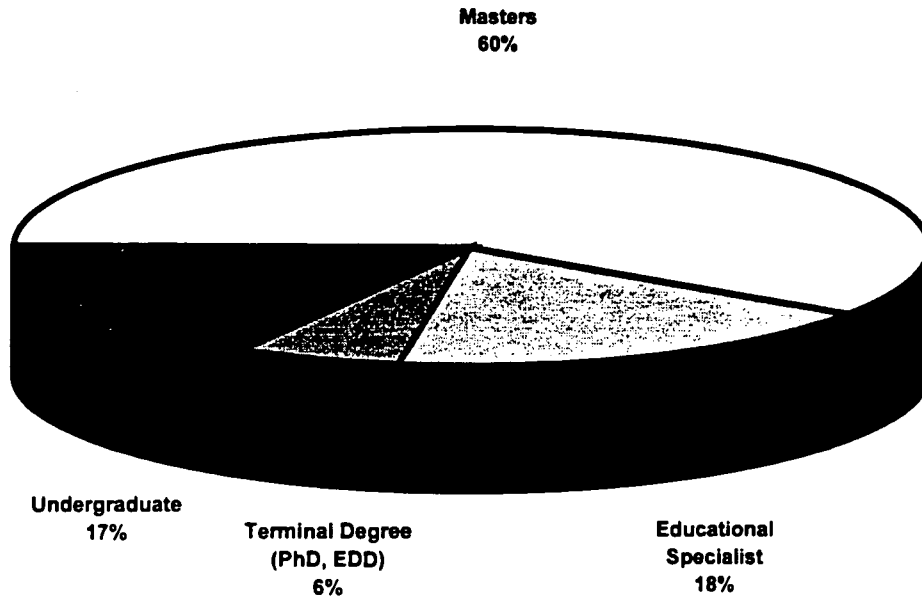
Figure 3: Educational Degrees Earned
Highest Degree Completed for CEC Conditions
SurveyRespondents
(N – 538)

Level of Agreement:
1=Strongly Disagree to 4=Strongly Agree

Group	Value
Sec. Class. Teachers	2.31
Special Ed. Teachers	2.43
Elem. Class. Teachers	2.45
Special Ed. Admin.	2.6
Elem. Principals	3.13
Sec. Principals	3.16

Groups Represented
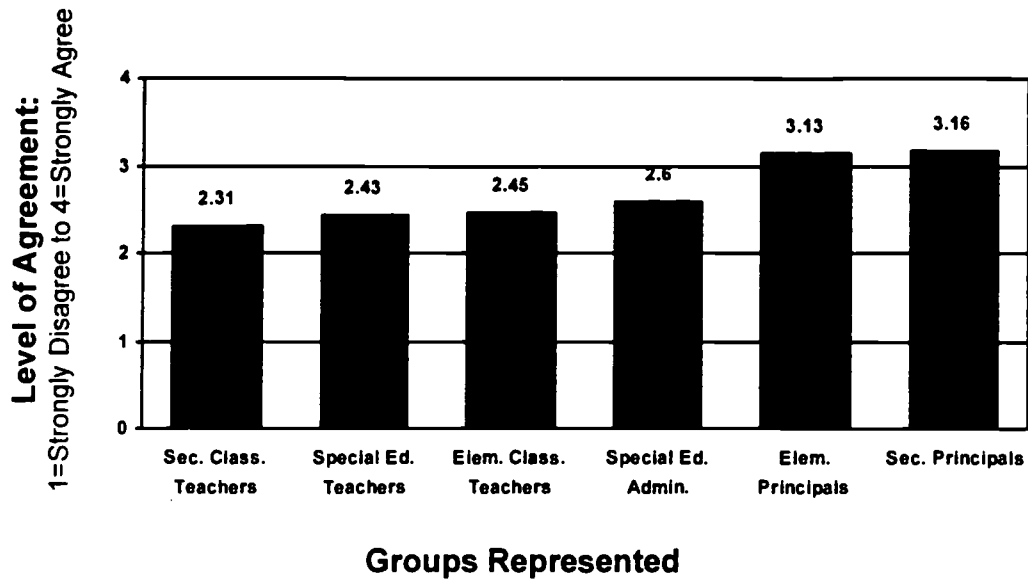
Figure 4: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of
Materials Available to Work with Students with Exceptionalities
(N = 538)
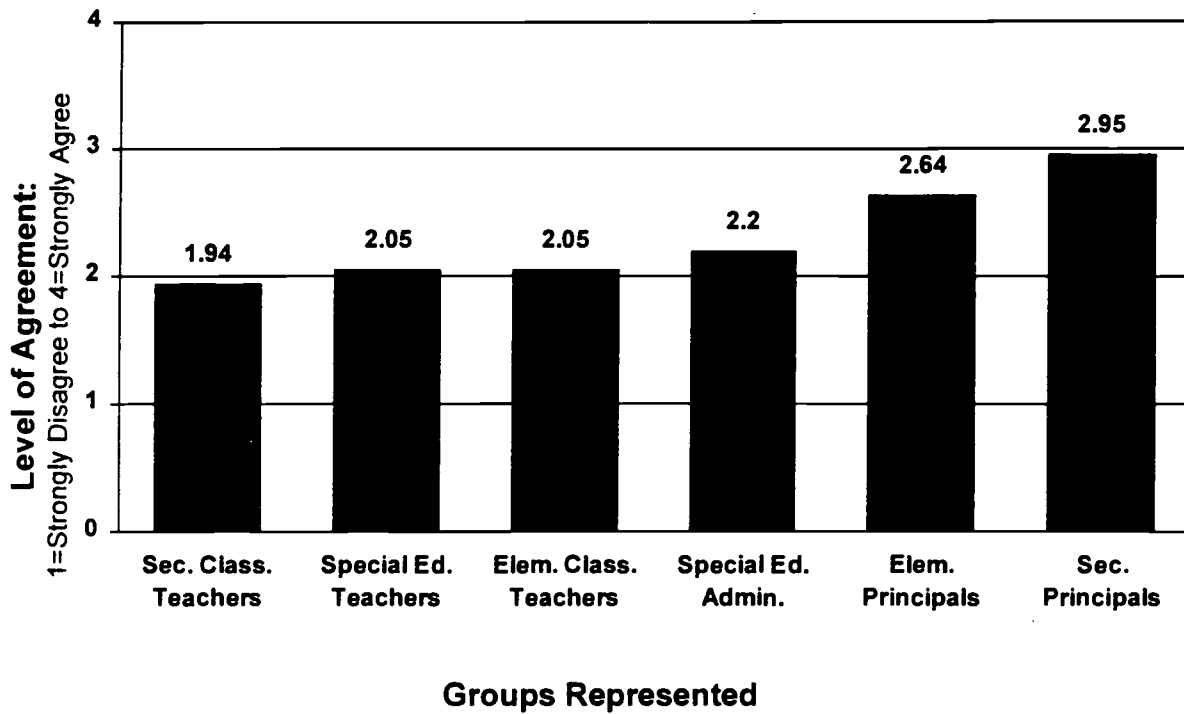
Figure 5: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of Software for
Record Keeping for Students with Exceptionalities
(N = 538)
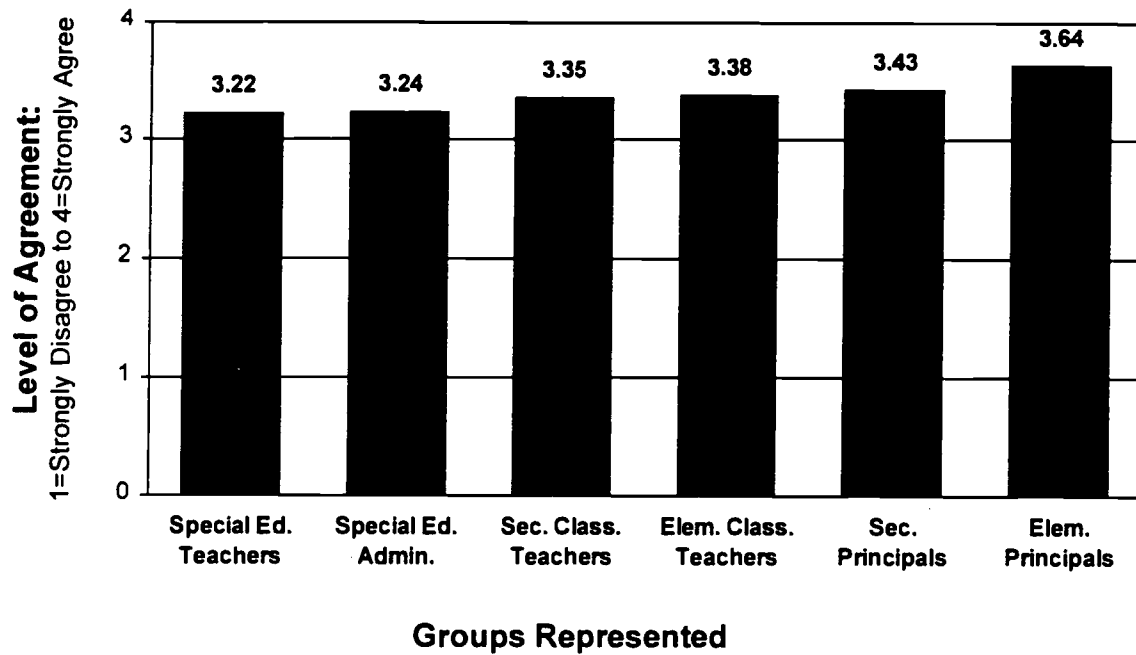
Figure 6: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of Access to District Curriculum Guidelines to Use with Students with Exceptionalities (N = 538)
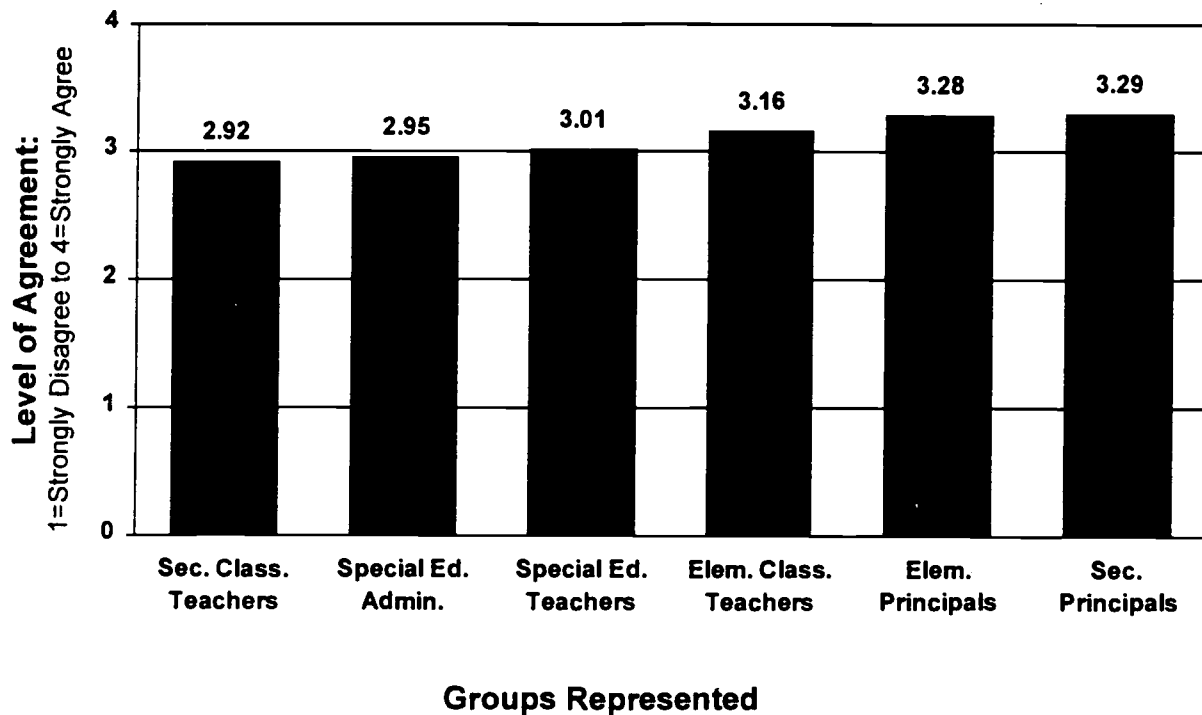
Figure 7: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of Appropriateness of Physical Facilities for Students with Exceptionalities (N = 538)
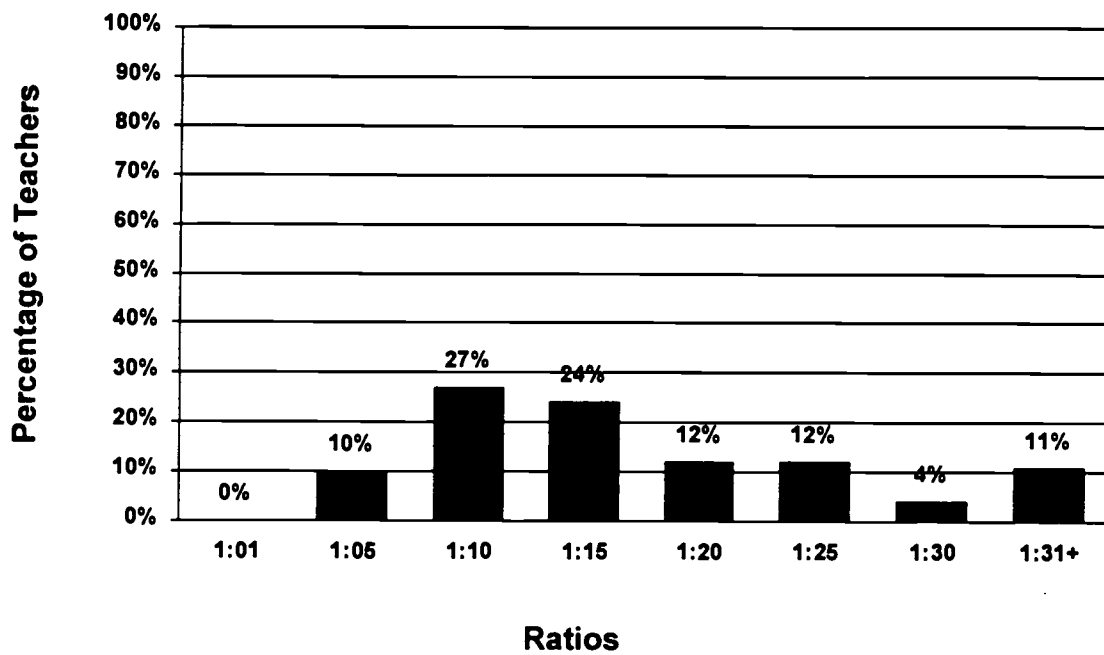
Figure 8: Special Education Teacher:Exceptional Student Ratio for Special Education Class Settings (N = 225)

Groups Represented
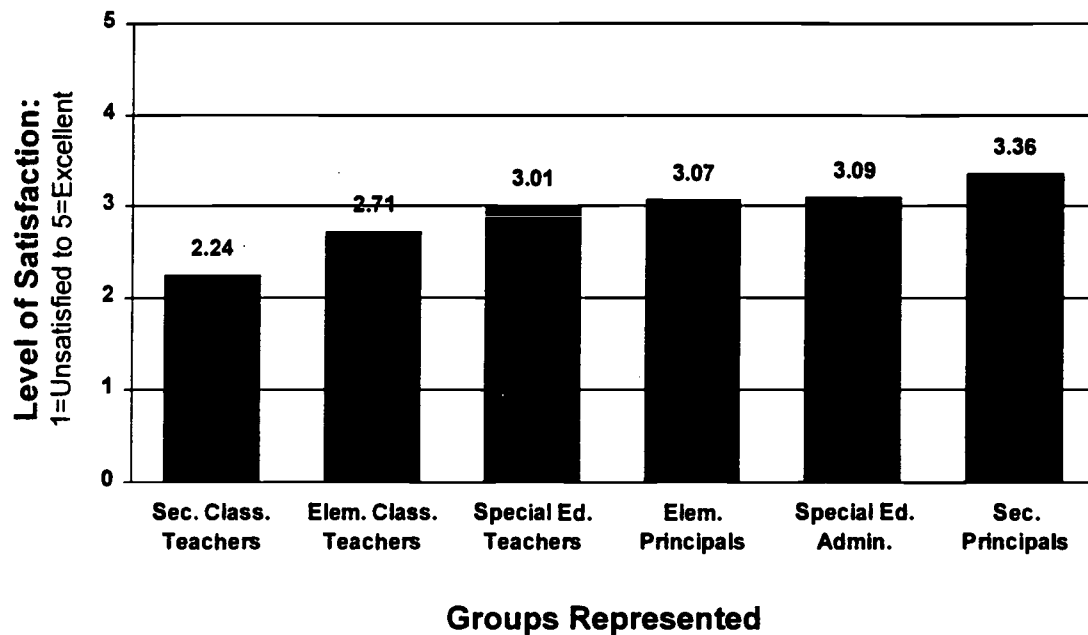
Figure 9: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of Preservice Preparation to Meet the Needs of Students with Exceptionalities (N = 538)
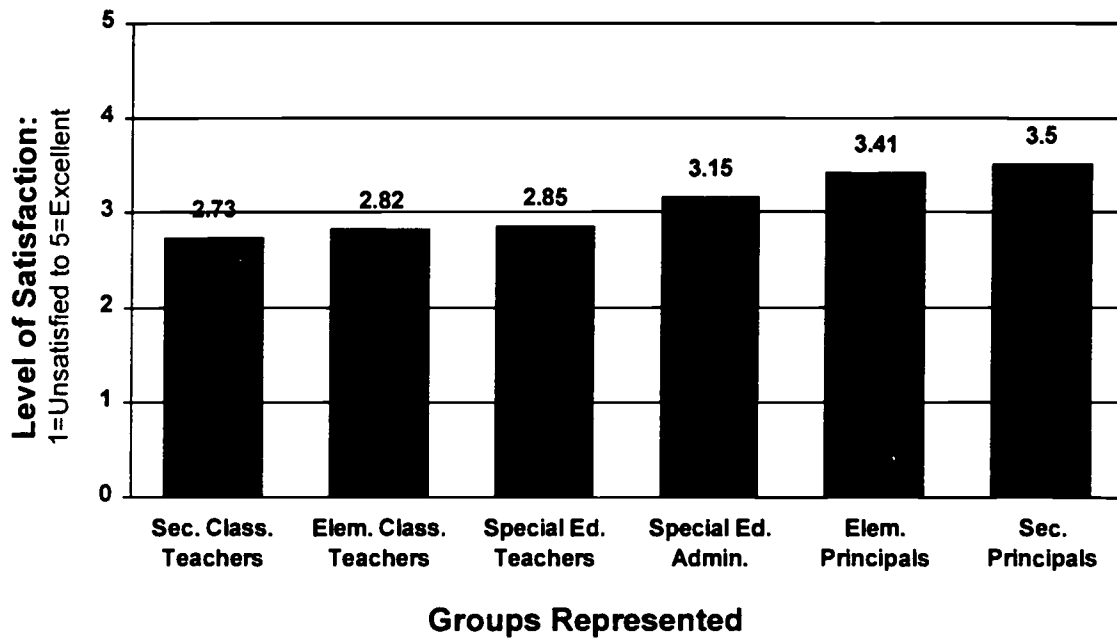
Figure 10: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of Professional Development Opportunities (N = 538)
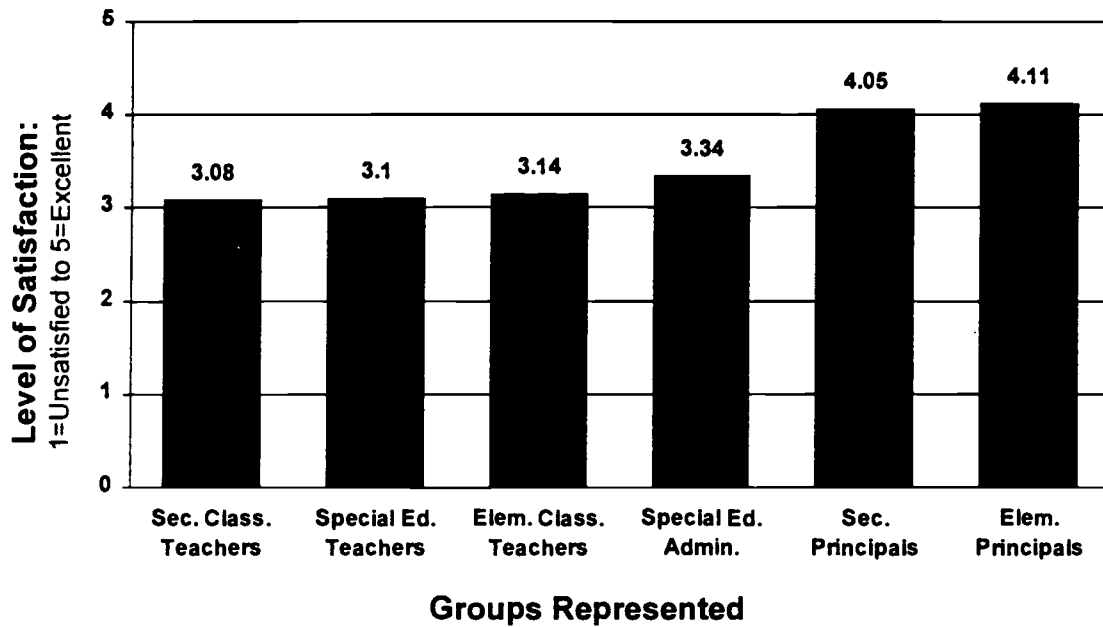
Figure 11: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of Sense of Physical Safety (N = 538)
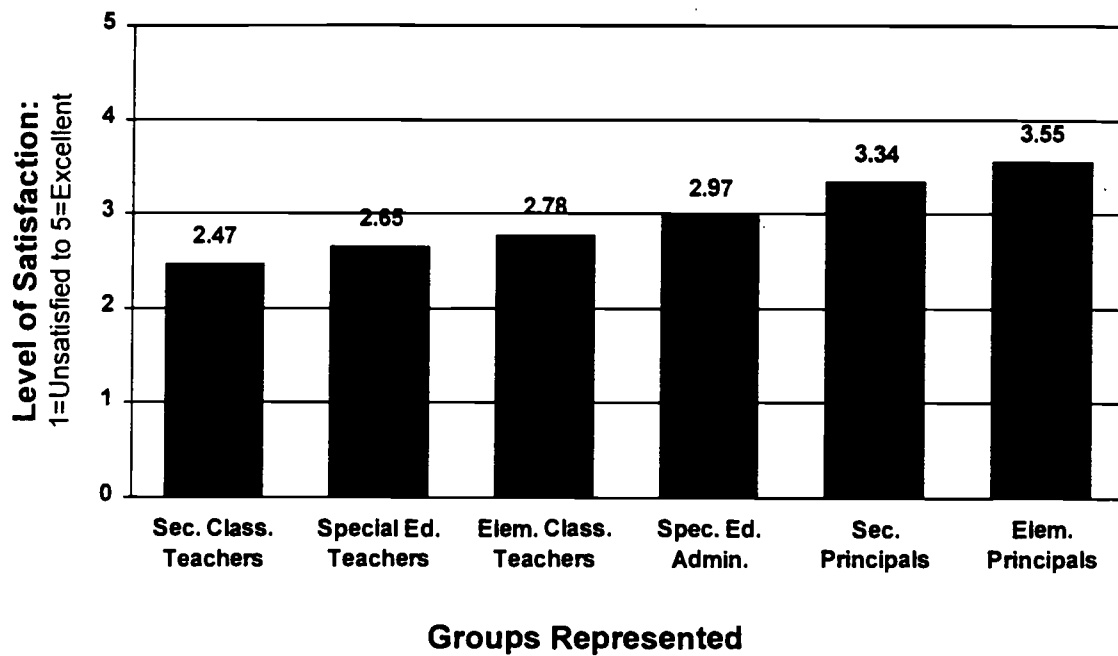
Figure 12: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of Satisfaction with
Communication regarding Students with Exceptionalities
(N = 538)

Groups Represented
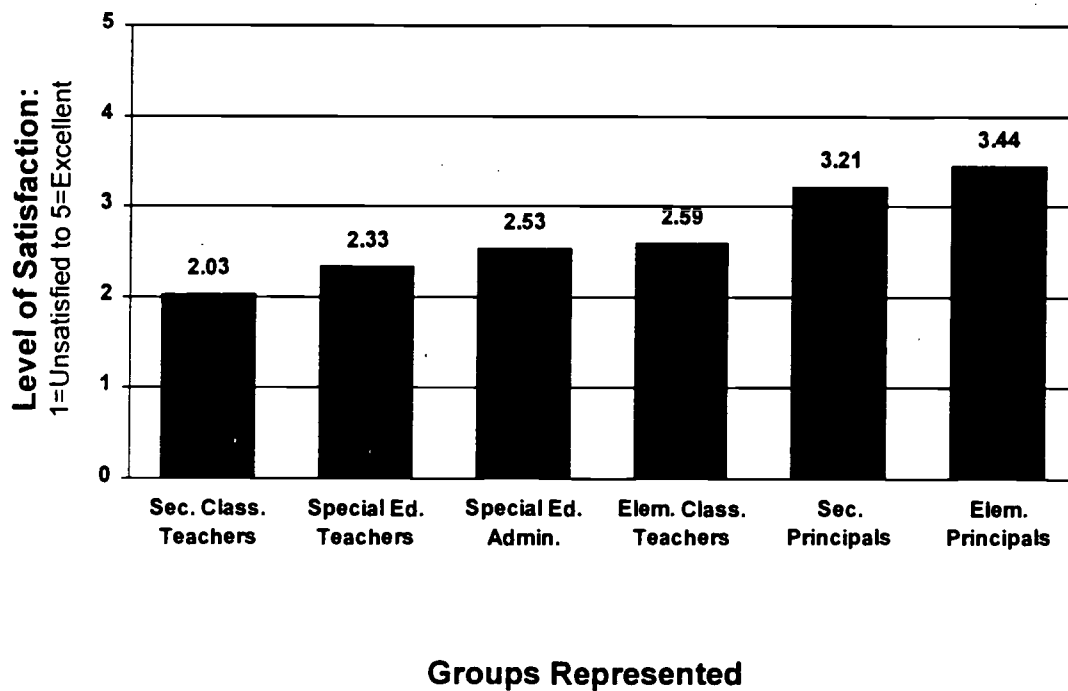
Figure 13: CEC Survey Respondents' Ratings of Planning Time Available for General & Special Educators to Work Together (N = 538)

Figure 14

CEC Survey Respondents, by Group, Rank Ordering of the Most
Important Concerns for the Education of Students
with Exceptionality
(n=538)

	Special Education Teachers	Special Education Administrators	Elementary Classroom Teachers	Secondary Classroom Teachers	Elementary Principals	Secondary Principals
1	Case Load	Planning Time	Case Load	Instructional Materials	Case Load	Case Load
2	Planning Time	Case Load	Administrative Support	Planning Time	Recruit and Retain (EC)	Recruit and Retain (EC)
3	Paperwork (IEPs)	Instructional Materials	Instructional Materials	Case Load	Planning Time	Paperwork (IEPs)
4	Instructional Materials	Paperwork (IEPs)	Recruit & Retain (EC)	Inservice - Staff Development	Paperwork (IEPs)	Planning Time
5	Administrative Support	Inservice – Staff Development	Planning Time	Paperwork (IEPs)	Instructional Materials	Instructional Materials
6	Needed Technology	Recruit and Retain (EC)	Inservice – Staff Development	Needed Technology	Inservice – Staff Development	Inservice – Staff Development
7	Inservice – Staff Development	Administrative Support	Paperwork (IEPs)	Administrative Support	Administrative Support	Administrative Support
8	Recruit and Retain (SET)	Needed Technology	Needed Technology	Recruit and Retain (EC)	Needed Technology	Quality Pre-Service
9	Quality Pre-Service	Quality Pre-Service	Quality Pre-Service	Quality Pre-Service	Quality Pre-Service	Needed Technology
10	State Licensing	State Licensing	State Licensing	State Licensing	State Licensing	State Licensing

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Figure 15

CEC Survey Respondents' Combined-Groups Rank Ordering
of the Most Important Concerns for the Education of
Students with Exceptionality
(n=225)

1	Case Load
2	Instructional Materials for EC
3	Planning Time
4	Administrative Support
5	Staff Development
6	Recruit and Retain EC Teachers
7	Paperwork
8	Technology to Support Instruction
9	Quality Pre-Service
10	State Licensing Programs
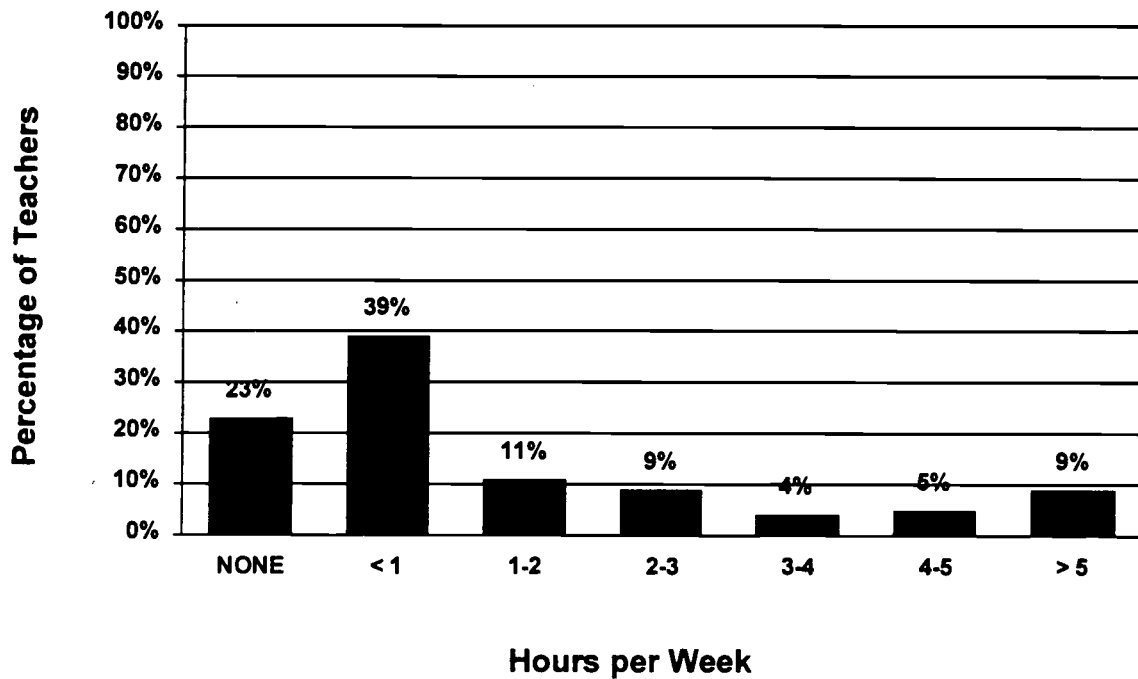
Figure 16: Hours Per Week Special Education Teachers Spent in Collaborative Instructional Settings
(N = 225)
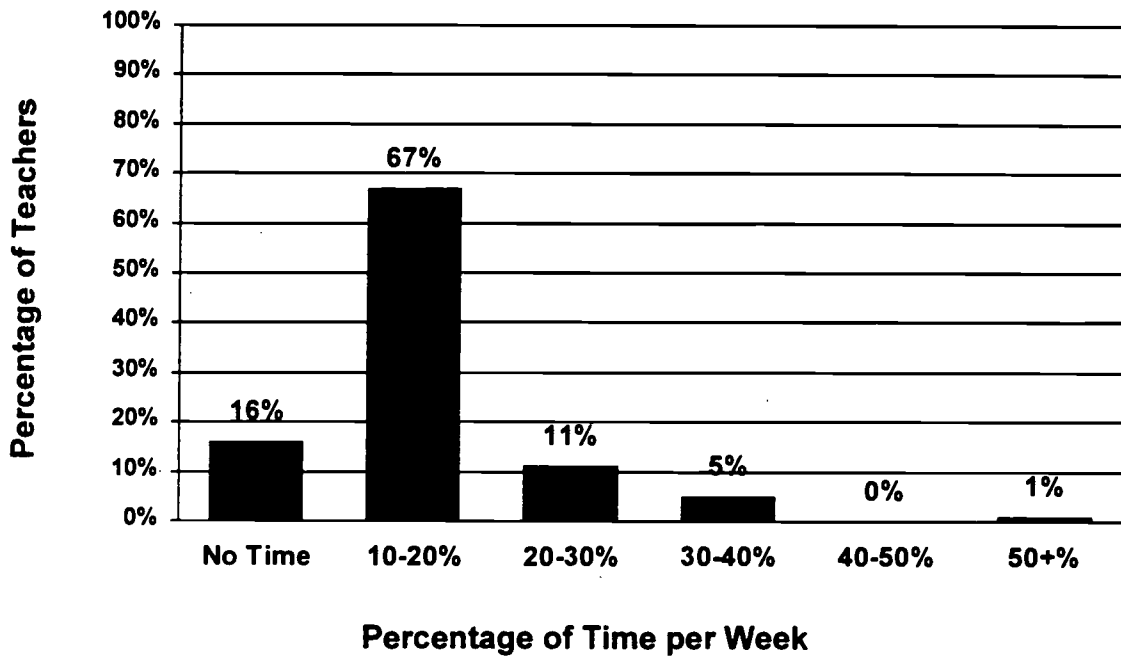
Figure 17: Percentage of Time per Week Special Educator Spent
Planning with Other Teachers
(N = 225)
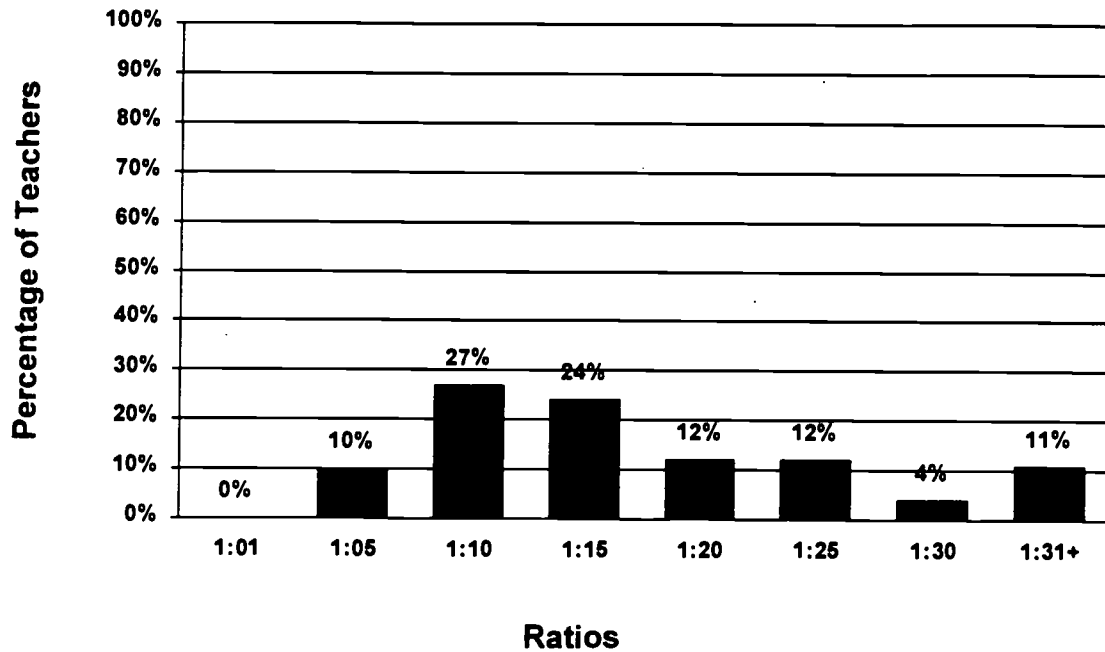
Figure 18: Special Education Teacher:Exceptional Student Ratio
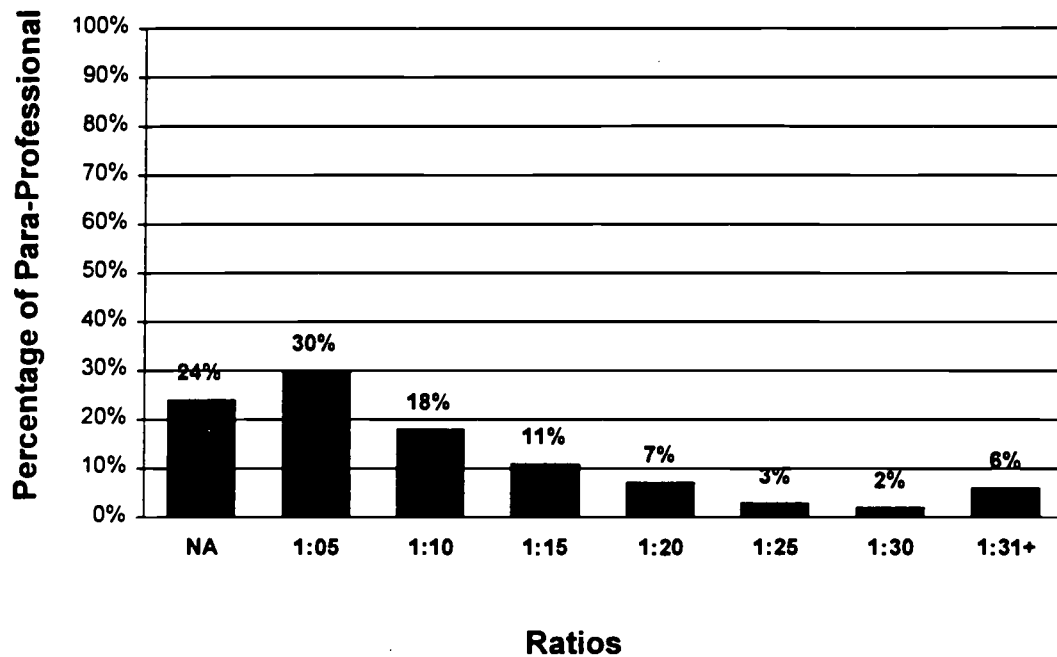for Special Education Class Settings
(N = 225)

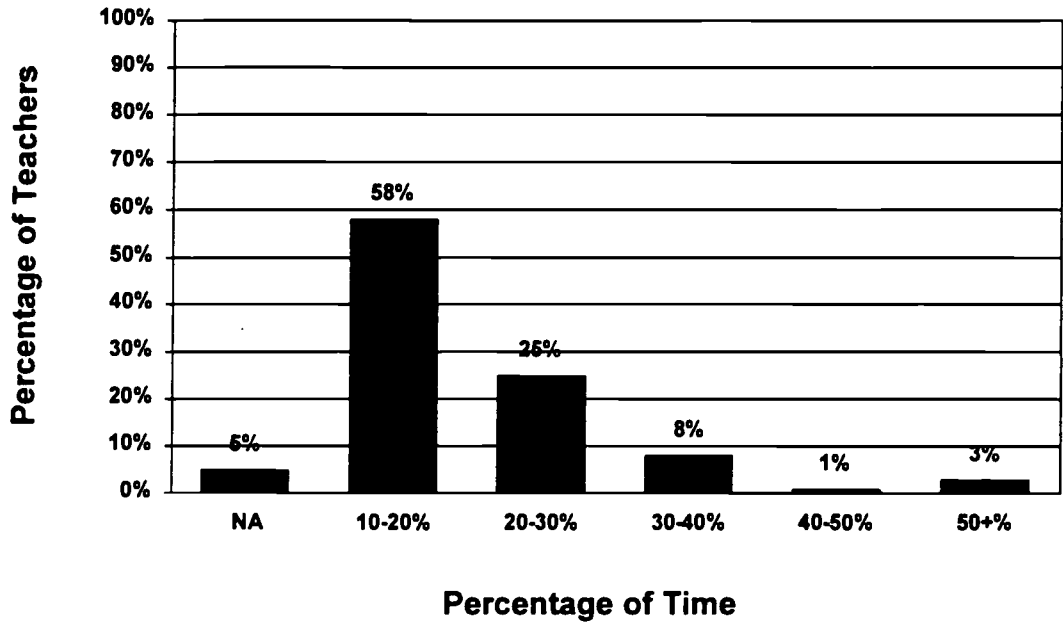**Figure 19: Paraprofessional:Exceptional Student Ratio in Special Education Classroom Settings (N = 225)**

Figure 20: Percentage Time per Week Special Educators Spent
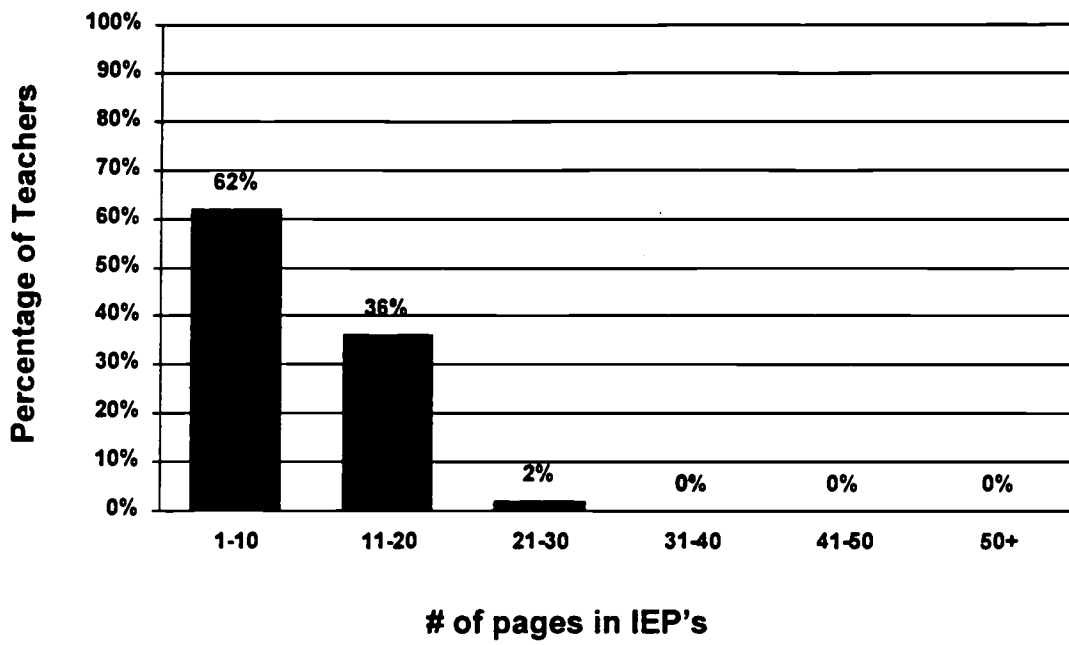In Meetings Related to Identification
and IEP's
(N = 225)

Figure 21: The Average Number of Pages of IEP's for Students with Exceptional Abilities
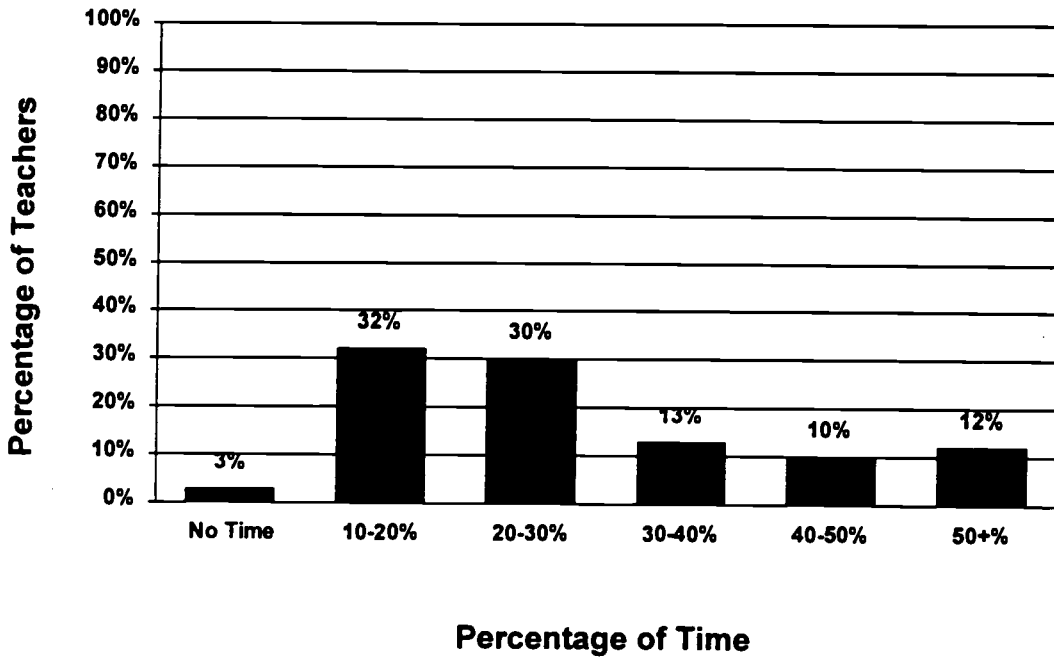**(N = 225)**

Figure 22: Percentage of Time Per Week Spent by Special
Education Teachers on Paperwork Related to the Identification of
Students and the Development of IEP's
(N = 225)

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List of Appendixes

A.   Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) - Mission

B.   Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) - Code of Ethics

Our Mission

The worldwide mission of The Council for Exceptional Children is to improve educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities.

CEC, a non-profit association, accomplishes its mission which is carried out in support of special education professionals and others working on behalf of individuals with exceptionalities, by advocating for appropriate governmental policies, by setting professional standards, by providing continuing professional development, by advocating for newly and historically underserved individuals with exceptionalities, and by helping professionals achieve the conditions and resources necessary for effective professional practice.

Adopted by the CEC Delegate Assembly, April 1995

OUR BELIEFS

WE BELIEVE...

- in advocating for the advancement of the education of individuals with exceptionalities.
- all individuals have the right to an education.
- all individuals have the ability to learn and attain self-fulfillment.

WE BELIEVE...

- in equitable access to and meaningful participation in quality educational opportunities for individuals with exceptionalities.
- in the development of preventative programs and services for children deemed to be at risk.
- in the opportunity for lifelong education for all individuals with exceptionalities.

WE BELIEVE...

- full participation of individuals with exceptionalities enriches all communities.
- education is a collaborative effort among learners, educators, families, communities, governments, businesses, and industries.
- CEC is THE professional organization of and for all special education professionals.

WE BELIEVE...

- qualified professionals are essential to meeting the diverse educational needs of individuals with exceptionalities.
- all special education professionals have a continuing responsibility to improve their practice.
- CEC has responsibility to assist special education professionals in

improving their practice.

WE BELIEVE...

- special education professionals have knowledge and skills to share with education and other professionals to meet the diverse learning needs of individuals with exceptionalities.
- special education professionals should practice in a manner consistent with CEC's Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Practice.
- special education professionals have a responsibility to collaborate with other professionals who work with individuals with exceptionalities to improve the delivery of instruction.

WE BELIEVE...

- governments have a responsibility to assure the provision of a free and appropriate education for all individuals with exceptionalities.
- CEC is committed to an international orientation to all of its professional activities.

WE BELIEVE...

- CEC shapes the future of education by fulfilling its mission.

Adopted by the CEC Delegate Assembly, April 16, 1982

CEC CODE OF ETHICS

We declare the following principles to be the Code of Ethics for educators of persons with exceptionalities. Members of the special education profession are responsible for upholding and advancing these principles. Members of The Council for Exceptional Children agree to judge and be judged by them in accordance with the spirit and provisions of this Code.

Special education professionals are committed to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential of individuals with exceptionalities.

  i. Special education professionals promote and maintain a high level of competence and integrity in practicing their profession.

  ii. Special education professionals engage in professional activities which benefit exceptional individuals, their families, other colleagues, students, or research subjects.

  iii. Special education professionals exercise objective professional judgement in the practice of their profession.

  iv. Special education professionals strive to advance their knowledge and skills regarding the education of individuals with exceptionalities.

  v. Special education professionals work within the standards and policies of their profession.

vi. Special education professionals seek to uphold and improve where necessary the laws, regulations, and policies governing the delivery of special education and related services and the practice of their profession.

vii. Special education professionals do not condone nor participate in unethical or illegal acts, or violate professional standards adopted by the Delegate Assembly of CEC.

Adopted by the CEC Delegate Assembly, April 1983

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