

A Compilation of Research on States' Licensure Models for Special Education Teachers  
and Special Education Requirements for Licensing General Education Teachers

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## *Introduction*

Mackey and McHenry (1994) observed that credentialing teachers in the United States dates back to the first quarter of the nineteenth century when local school districts and counties established agencies to examine and license teachers. Decades later state agencies entered the arena in order to standardize evaluations of teacher candidates. The involvement of these agencies has continued since that time.

Interest in states agencies' models and requirements for licensing teachers of students with disabilities was evident in the 1950s. The primary purpose of this report is to summarize research on models and requirements for licensure\* of special education teachers. The report also includes summaries of studies of special education preparation required for certification of general education teachers. The studies in this report are organized chronologically – prior to 1980, the 1980s, the 1990s and the early 2000s. Within each period studies have been clustered according to type or area of investigation. Licensure studies in three areas (categorical and non-categorical models of licensure, required special education preparation for general educators, and comprehensive studies of special education licensure) are common to each of the periods reviewed. Research on models of non-traditional/alternative approaches to preparing and licensing special education teachers that multiplied in the 1990s is not included in this report.

## *Licensure of Special Education Teachers Prior to 1980*

*Licensure in specific areas.* In the early 1950s Marjorie Young (1952) reviewed state manuals for the purpose of compiling and analyzing certification standards for teachers of children who were partially seeing. She noted that although 39 states and territories had facilities for children who were partially seeing, 20 of the jurisdictions\*\* reported no specific certification standards for teachers of these children. The certification requirements adopted by the 19 remaining jurisdictions typically included general education, related courses in special education, courses in the area of visual impairment, and personal qualifications. However, three of the 19 jurisdictions did not require courses in the area of visual impairment.

In 1969 Schwartz studied licensure standards for teachers of students with learning disabilities. Forty-five states, nine Canadian Provinces, and Mexico responded to a written survey. Schwartz provided reports from each of the jurisdictions. There was

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\*The terms "licensure" and "certification" will be used interchangeably in this report.

\*\*Because the literature on special education licensure models, includes many studies of states and similar governmental units of the United States, and, in at least one instance, other countries, the term "jurisdictions" will be used instead of "states," except in quotations and when a statement applies only to a state or states.

considerable variation in licensure standards for teachers of students with learning disabilities. Twenty-one of the respondents reported having no licensure standards for teachers of students with learning disabilities. Only 12 jurisdictions reported licensing teachers in the area of learning disabilities. The remaining respondents licensed teachers for students with learning disabilities under another disability category, e. g., orthopedically disabled, mental retardation. Schwartz surmised that the practice of classifying teachers of students with learning disabilities under other categorical headings indicated “a need for education of legislators and educators to the unique problems of these children” (p. 35).

Shortly after P. L. 94-142, *The Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, was enacted, Russo and Stark (1976) published a study of state licensure in the area of severe/profound disabilities. They found that four jurisdictions licensed teachers in this area. Seven jurisdictions anticipated licensing in this area in the near future. Thirty jurisdictions indicated they would not license teachers in severe/profound disabilities in the near future, and nearly half of the jurisdictions saw no need to do so.

In the same year Spungin (1976) conducted a “thorough investigation of how states issue certificates for teachers of the visually handicapped” (p. 438). She summarized information on the following licensure requirements: degrees required, courses, certificates, duration of certificates, renewal procedures, availability of a provisional certification, and duration of provisional certificate. Five jurisdictions did not require special certification of teachers of students with visual disabilities. Thirty-four states reported that a certificate in general education was required prior to obtaining a license in the area of visual disabilities. The amount of specialized preparation in visual disabilities ranged from 8-28 semester hours. Joint certification for teachers of the blind and partially sighted was reported as being less common than distinct certificates for the two areas.

In 1978 Morgan published the results of research on the delivery of educational services to children with severe emotional disturbances and on the certification of teachers for these children. She found information on guidelines for certification to be confusing. Fourteen jurisdictions (of the 40 that responded) indicated that they had “separate standards for certification in the area of severe disturbance, in contrast to the category of behavioral disorders or social/emotionally maladjusted” (p. 270). However, when examining jurisdictions’ guidelines, she found this separate area of licensure in only three jurisdictions. Six jurisdictions awarded non-categorical licenses for teachers of all children with disabilities, excluding those with visual or hearing impairments.

*Categorical and non-categorical models of licensure.* Belch (1979) reported the results of a national study designed to determine whether there was a trend toward “comprehensive teacher certification in special education” (p. 129). Eleven jurisdictions reported non-categorical certification equivalent to comprehensive certification for special educators. Another 12 jurisdictions reported that they were moving toward a form of non-categorical certification.

*Required special education preparation for general education teachers.* In 1978 Sargent reported 18 states and the District of Columbia required preparation of general educators in order to better educate students with disabilities in their classrooms. Another ten states had requirements pending.

A year later Patton and Braithwaite (1979) found that ten jurisdictions had requirements for special education courses or experiences for the initial licensure or relicensure of regular classroom teachers. Some jurisdictions required specific courses in special education; others required that content in special education be incorporated in all approved teacher education programs. Four jurisdictions had pending requirements for the preparation of general education teachers in special education, and two had pending requirements for preparation in special education for the relicensure of general education teachers.

*Comprehensive studies of special education licensure.* In 1954 Mackie and Dunn provided a “national overview of State certification requirements for teachers of exceptional children” (p. vii) in a Bulletin published by through the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The intent of the report was to provide information on the status of certification for teachers of exceptional children and allow comparisons to be made across jurisdictions and across areas of exceptionality. The Bulletin contained summaries of certification requirements for teachers in each of ten areas of exceptionality (blind, partially seeing, crippled, special health problems, deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech handicapped, socially maladjusted, mentally retarded, and gifted) for the 48 states and the District of Columbia. The Bulletin also contained a brief chapter in which the results of a survey of the desirability of different models of certification were reported.

The report provided summaries of certifications required by jurisdictions. Thirty-three jurisdictions reported special certification requirements for teachers in one or more of the ten types of exceptionality. Pennsylvania had certification standards for all ten areas. Twenty-one other jurisdictions had certification standards in at least four areas of exceptionality. Nine states had standards for one to three of the areas of exceptionality, and two states awarded single credentials for teaching all types of exceptional children. The authors observed that many jurisdictions adopted joint or combined certificates that allowed individuals to be certified to two areas of exceptionality, for example, blind and partially seeing.

Eighteen jurisdictions reported no special certification according to areas of exceptionality. However, Mackie and Dunn noted that some of these jurisdictions required “local school systems to employ teachers with specialized preparation satisfactory to the State department of education” (p. 9).

Mackie and Dunn concluded that certification requirements for teachers of exceptional children had three major components: 1) personal characteristics, 2) general requirements and prerequisites, and 3) specialized requirements and related course work. The authors summarized jurisdictions’ general requirements and specialized requirements for certificates in all areas of exceptionality.

Nearly 20 years after the report by Mackie and Dunn, Abeson and Fleury (1972) edited *State Certification Requirements for Education of the Handicapped*. The report was prepared to meet the need for a single document that identified jurisdictions' requirements for credentialing special education teachers. The authors believed their report would enable comparisons of licensure standards and requirements to be made among jurisdictions. Also, they hoped that the information they compiled would serve as a "baseline" for understanding future changes in licensure requirements for special education teachers.

The report contains information excerpted from states' published certification documents. A three-part structure was designed to organize requirements for licensure of special educators. The structure consisted of 1) type of certificate required for special education, 2) general requirements, and 3) categories of disability.

The report revealed that most states' licensure regulations were based on categories of disabilities. The number of special education licensure areas ranged from one to eight. The most commonly reported categories of licensure were mental retardation, hearing-impaired, speech/language, visual impairment, and physical impairments. Less than 30 jurisdictions were identified as licensing teachers in the area of emotional disturbance with some jurisdictions indicating that licensure requirements in this area were the same as those for other areas of disability. Less than half of the jurisdictions reported having licensure in the area of learning disabilities. Fewer than ten jurisdictions had some form of non-categorical licensure for special educators.

Five years after the study by Abeson and Fleury, Gilmore and Aroyros (1977) provided a comprehensive report on the special education certification. They shared the results of an analysis of certification documents from jurisdictions and described models of special education licensure. When they compared regulations across jurisdictions, they found many differences. The most evident and basic differences were in the number and types of categories of licensure in special education. Consequently, they created a classification system based on the number of categories of special education licensure within jurisdictions. Two primary models of licensure of special education teachers emerged from their analysis. The first model consisted of six or more licensure categories based on disabilities. This model was adopted by at least 35 jurisdictions. The second model consisted of structure with six or fewer categories of disability and a generic license in special education. Nine jurisdictions used this model. Two states, California and Massachusetts were identified as having unique models.

The most frequently reported number of licensure categories reported by jurisdictions was seven. The most common categories of licensure identified by Gilmore and Aroyros were hearing impairments (43), vision impairments (39), speech/language impairments (37), mental retardation (35), emotional disturbance (33), physical disabilities (33), and learning disabilities (31).

The authors observed that jurisdictions usually awarded “free-standing “ licenses in special education, i. e., other licenses were not prerequisite to special education licenses. However, they noted this practice was not uniform among jurisdictions.

When information was available from jurisdictions, Gilmore and Aroyros reported on age or grade ranges for special education licenses. A preponderance of the jurisdictions had a K-12 or Prek-12 model for licensing special education teachers. Ten jurisdictions were identified as offering separate special education licenses at the elementary and secondary levels.

In 1979 Barresi and Bunte published a report similar to that prepared by Gilmore and Aroyros. Barresi and Bunte also used “number of categories” to analyze models of special education licensure. Jurisdictions with six or more areas of licensure in special education were classified as having a “categorical model.” Those with less than six categories were considered to have a “generic model.” Thirty-five jurisdictions had “categorical models;” 14 used “generic models;” one used both; and three had other models. They noted that some jurisdictions classified as having a “categorical model” had a generic certificate as one of their categorical certificates.

Barresi and Bunte also reported that 34 jurisdictions treated special education licensure as freestanding, and 34 treated it as an endorsement to another license. Twenty-one jurisdictions required elementary or secondary licensure for special education teachers. In 17 jurisdictions special education licensure was both freestanding and an endorsement to another license.

Nineteen jurisdictions reported that courses in special education were required for licensure of general education teachers. Many jurisdictions had added this requirement recently, and six jurisdictions were considering such a requirement.

All but one jurisdiction reported that approval of higher education programs was the basis for licensing teachers. Completion of required courses was an additional basis for licensure in 22 jurisdictions; and proof of the acquisition of competencies was required in 14 jurisdictions. Satisfactory performance on statewide tests was required in nine jurisdictions.

Barresi and Bunte reported that 13 jurisdictions licensed teachers for gifted/talented children. Ten licensed preschool special education teachers, and six had some form of credential for paraeducators in special education.

*Licensure of special education teachers of adolescents or young children with disabilities.* Clark and Oliverson (1973) conducted one of the earliest studies of issues related to the preparation of secondary special education teachers. An objective of their study was to determine certification requirements for secondary special education teachers. Questionnaires were mailed to persons responsible for mental retardation programs in states’ departments of education. Responses were received from 47 states. Seventy-four per cent of the respondents reported “regular elementary certificates and special education (K-12) certificates were the most commonly approved combinations of

certification” (p. 545). Eight states reported issuing special education certificates for grades 6-12; seven states issued special education certificates for grades 9-12.

In 1977 Hirshoren and Umansky published the results of a study designed to assess teacher certification practices for teachers of preschool children with disabilities. Twelve states had certification requirements for these teachers. The authors noted that many more states had higher education preparation programs for teachers of preschool children with disabilities than had certification requirements in this area.

*Observations.* Early researchers on the topic of licensure of special education teachers discovered that jurisdictions used a variety of models for licensing teachers for students with different types of disabilities. Categorical, various forms of non-categorical, and other models of certification were adopted by jurisdictions. Researchers attempted to create frameworks in order to better understand and study the array of licensure practices they encountered. Number of licenses and categorical vs. generic options were key factors in these frameworks.

A case can be made that prior to 1980 there was growth in both categorical areas and non-categorical options for special education licensure. For example, Schwartz reported only 12 jurisdictions licensed teachers for students with learning disabilities in 1969. Eight years later Gilmore and Aroyros reported 31 jurisdictions awarded such a license. Similarly, Abeson and Fleury (1972) reported that only seven jurisdictions had some form of non-categorical licensure for special educators. In 1979 Barresi and Bunte reported 15 jurisdictions had some form of “generic” model of licensure.

Toward the end of this period we see the emergence of interest in requirements that general education teachers become familiar with special education and in licensure requirements for teachers of young children with disabilities. Attention to these issues will continue in the decades that follow.

#### *Licensure of Special Education Teachers in the 1980s*

In the 1980s research on special education licensure continued to explore previously established paths. In addition to the areas addressed in earlier research, an interest in assessment of teacher candidates’ knowledge of special education emerged in the 1980s.

*Licensure in specific areas.* In 1982 Bagwell continued the line of investigation into licensure requirements for teachers of students with learning disabilities. Fifty state directors of special education in the United States and District of Columbia responded to the mail survey. Information on required courses and competencies for certificates in learning disabilities was obtained and summarized for each responding jurisdiction.

Bagwell discovered that the “vast majority of the states” (p. 57) had the same certification requirements for elementary and secondary teachers of students with learning disabilities. Seven states reported having differentiated requirements for elementary and secondary teachers. Sixteen jurisdictions reported that a change in

certification requirements was being considered. Eighteen states indicated that the needs of adolescents in secondary programs were not addressed in the requirements for a license in the area of learning disabilities.

Geiger and Justen (1983) reported on states' certification models for teachers of students with severe disabilities. State agencies utilized one of three models of licensure in this area. Twenty-one states licensed teachers in specific categories of disability, e. g., mental retardation. An equal number of states offered a specialized license in the area of severe disabilities, and eight states issued generic special education licenses for teachers of students with disabilities.

Salend and Fradd (1985) conducted a survey for Commissioners of Education of the 50 states and the District of Columbia in order to determine the existence of certification and training programs for bilingual special educators. The authors summarized their findings by jurisdiction. Only one jurisdiction (California) reported having formal licensure in bilingual special education; and one (New Mexico) reported having a bilingual component in its special education licensure requirements.

In 1986 Leigh and Patton added to the literature on licensure patterns for teachers of students with learning disabilities. They observed that the titles of state licenses for these teachers varied considerably across jurisdictions. While a majority of the jurisdictions offered a specific endorsement in learning disabilities, approximately 40 percent of them used a more generic credential. Information was obtained on the number of credit hours of required preparation for teachers. For jurisdictions with credit hour requirements, the range was from 18-41 semester hours. Twenty-seven semester hours was the mean. Although a majority of the jurisdictions reported that licensure was based on completion of courses in specific areas, seventeen jurisdictions had specific competency standards, rather than courses, in their licensure requirements.

In 1987 Huebner and Strumwasser reported the results of a study of certification requirements for teachers of children who were blind or visually impaired. Questionnaires were sent to all the states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands. Forty-five jurisdictions reported that they offered specific licenses for teachers of blind and visually impaired. Only one jurisdiction reported offering more than one type of license in the area of vision. All but one jurisdiction reported that licensure was K-12. Twenty jurisdictions offered initial licensure in the area of vision; 23 required regular elementary or secondary teacher licensure. At least four other jurisdictions required a generic special education license in addition to the credential in the area of visual impairment. Also, four jurisdictions reported they certified orientation and mobility teachers. The authors examined other dimensions of credentialing including reciprocity, number of credit hours required in vision, and student teaching requirements.

*Categorical and non-categorical models of licensure.* In 1986, McLaughlin, Smith-Davis, and Burke reported on the categorical and non-categorical licensure requirements for the fifty states, District of Columbia and United States' Territories. From a total of 56 jurisdictions, 30 had categorical models of licensure. The remaining 26



had non-categorical models. The authors noted that the licensure standards for many jurisdictions included both categorical and non-categorical options. They also observed trends toward “creating separate endorsements or increasing requirements for teachers of severely handicapped, including the autistic” (p. 37) and “certifying special education teachers from grades K-12” (p. 37). Although K-12 models of special education licensure were very common, some jurisdictions awarded special education licenses based on developmental levels (age or grades), especially early childhood.

Two years later McLaughlin and Stettner-Eaton (1988) reported that jurisdictions appeared to be “moving toward more non-categorical models of certification”(p. 12). When they compared studies conducted in 1977 and in 1986, they found that a minimum of ten states had shifted from categorical to non-categorical models of certification for special education teachers. Non-categorical licensure was reported as being most common for teachers of students with mild disabilities. Licensure models for teachers of students with moderate and severe disabilities often required specific categorical endorsements added to generic requirements in special education.

In 1988 another study of categorical and non-categorical licensure models was published. Mauser and Cranston-Gingras (1988) reported the results of a nationwide study in which State Special Education Directors and State Directors of Teacher Certification were respondents. Although they reported finding “two distinct models of special education teacher certification, categorical and non-categorical” (p. 2), Mauser and Cranston-Gingras noted that many jurisdictions used both options. The authors perceived a preference for categorical certification; yet they discerned a developing trend toward non-categorical options. These options were particularly noteworthy for teachers of students with mild disabilities.

Inconsistencies were observed in the responses from special education personnel and certification personnel in the states. For example, directors of special education in 17 jurisdictions reported that their models for licensure were categorical; certification personnel in 22 jurisdictions reported categorical licensure systems. Different responses were also reported regarding non-categorical systems of licensure and combined categorical and non-categorical options.

Mauser and Cranston-Gingras reported that approximately 30% of the jurisdictions required that special education teachers also be certified in regular elementary and/or secondary education. They also noted that approximately 50% of the jurisdictions had some form of competency examinations for applicants for certification in special education.

*Required special education preparation for general education teachers.* Smith and Schindler (1980) explored jurisdictions’ requirements for the preparation of general education teachers to instruct exceptional students. All of the states and the District of Columbia responded to questionnaires. Nearly one-half (25) of the jurisdictions had no certification requirements in this area nor were they considering such requirements. Fifteen states had requirements in this area, and 11 were considering such requirements

or anticipated implementing such a requirement in the near future. Only Oklahoma required more than one course on the topic.

Four years later Granschow, Weber, and Davis (1984) reported on a study of certification requirements for elementary and secondary teachers regarding preparation in the field of special education. Responses were received from all 50 states. Fourteen jurisdictions reported having no specific certification requirements related to the preparation of general education teachers to provide instruction to students with disabilities. Thirty-four states had some type of requirement. Seventeen of those states required a single course on exceptionalities; two states required two courses on the topic; seven states had specific guidelines; and eight states had general references to competencies about students with disabilities in their guidelines. The two remaining states had requirements for a single course on exceptionalities pending. The authors noted a trend for states to require that general education teachers receive preparation to provide instruction to students with disabilities.

Two years later Tait (1987) found that 33 jurisdictions had requirements that general education teachers receive “exposure” to the needs and characteristics of exceptional learners. One jurisdiction anticipated adding such a requirement. The methods of “exposure” adopted by the states varied considerably. Some jurisdictions required that content be included in regular courses in the curriculum; others required that a specific course(s) in special education be completed. Some jurisdictions required practica with field experiences that included students with exceptionalities, and some required assessment of special competencies related to the education of students with exceptionalities. Tait concluded that the number of jurisdictions requiring “exposure” to information about exceptional children had increased substantially since the late 1970s.

*Comprehensive studies of special education licensure.* Chapey, Pyszkowski, and Trimarco (1985) published the results of a national study of certification and training of special education teachers. They found that licensure of special educators varied noticeably across jurisdictions. Although 26 respondents indicated they would maintain categorical teacher certification, twenty-five jurisdictions reported they were moving toward “a generalist concept of certifying teachers non-categorically or generically” (p.204). The authors asked the representatives of jurisdictions to identify changes in special education licensure they would like to see. Seventy per cent reported a preference for non-categorical certification. The authors concluded that licensure practices for special education teachers were changing throughout the United States.

The report by Chapey et al. provided information on the number of jurisdictions issuing licenses in specific categorical areas. The areas of visual disabilities and hearing disabilities were reported most frequently. Forty-three jurisdictions issued licenses in each of these areas. Other areas in which categorical licenses were frequently awarded included speech/language impairments (38), mental retardation (34), emotional disturbance (34), learning disabilities (34), physical/multiple disabilities (31).

Chapey et al. also discovered differences in how jurisdictions’ interpreted licenses for teachers of students with learning disabilities. In some jurisdictions the designation

was reserved for teachers prepared to teach children with specific learning disabilities; in others it was considered to be a generic type of license awarded to teachers prepared to teach children with a variety of disabilities.

Chapey and colleagues also inquired about special education requirements for general education teachers. Fifteen jurisdictions required that general education teachers have a course in special education; and five jurisdictions reported that two courses were required. Thirty-five jurisdictions recommended that general education teachers be required to have some preparation in special education, and 26 of them expressed a preference for at least two courses in special education for general education teachers.

On behalf of the Council for Exceptional Children, Fearn (1987) conducted an extensive study of licensure of special educators. Her investigation included reviewing literature on the licensure of special education teachers, conducting a survey of jurisdictions' policies and procedures for licensure, and examination of jurisdictions' licensure manuals. The scope of the study included the 50 states, District of Columbia, and the U. S. Territories, including Puerto and the U. S. Virgin Islands. With few exceptions all jurisdictions required at least a bachelor's degree for a licensure in special education. Eight jurisdictions reported that a master's degree or fifth year of study was required for licensure in one or more areas of special education. Fearn noted that some jurisdictions had mechanisms that allowed for licensure without a bachelor's degree.

Information was obtained on age/grade levels of special education licensure. Twelve states licensed teachers in elementary special education; five in middle level; and secondary special education licensure was reported for 21 jurisdictions. Fifteen configurations/designations for licensure in early childhood special education were identified.

Fearn identified 181 different titles of licenses in special education. She created a classification system of 17 designations as a means of organizing the titles. She also reported that 18 jurisdictions required that special educators satisfy licensure requirements in elementary or secondary education in addition to meeting certification standards in special education.

Twenty jurisdictions required specific courses and/or competencies for candidates for special education licenses. Eleven of the jurisdictions had sets of core competencies in special education that were required of all special education teachers. Twenty-two jurisdictions required specific numbers of credit hours for licensure, ranging from 12-semester hours to 60 semester hours. Many of the jurisdictions that stipulated a number of credit hours also specified topical areas or competencies for courses.

Information was reported on requirements for student teaching for licenses in special education. Jurisdictions stated their student teaching requirements in the area of special education in a variety of ways.

Fearn also reported information on the status of licensure of special education administrators. Five jurisdictions reported having no such license. Twenty jurisdictions used licenses in general education administration as the required credentials for special educator administrators; 26 jurisdictions had specific licenses for special education administrators.

*Licensure in early childhood special education.* During the 1980s the topic of licensure requirements for early childhood special educators was examined by at least three teams of investigators. In 1980 Trohanis, Barker, Button, Hazen, Jackson, Karp, May, Meyer, Moore, Norman, Osteen, and Rostetter noted that during the period between 1976 and 1979, four jurisdictions developed licensure standards in early childhood special education and another eight were in the process of developing standards. In addition, three jurisdictions had developed competencies for early childhood special education teachers; and six were in the process of developing competencies for licensure of these teachers.

In 1984 Stile, Abernathy, Pettibone, & Watchtel reported on the status of the licensure of preschool teachers of students with disabilities. Twenty of the 54 jurisdictions surveyed reported having separate early childhood special education licenses. Nineteen jurisdictions indicated that preparation in special education was required for a regular early childhood license, but only 11 jurisdictions required preparation in early childhood education for early childhood special education teachers. Three jurisdictions indicated that such requirements were under development.

A few years later Smith and Powers (1987) completed analyses of 15 states' policies for licensing early childhood special education teachers. They found that ten of the states had competency-based licensure requirements.

*Assessment for licensure in special education.* In 1988 Ramsey directed attention to assessment of candidates for licensure in special education. She reported that 26 states "administer, or are in the process of developing or adopting, specialty area tests in special education" (p. 11). At least four other states were identified as having required assessment of special education candidates under study. Ramsey identified specific categorical or generic areas in which states required assessments.

*Observations.* The 1980s saw a continued interest in categorical and non-categorical models of licensure for special education teachers. By the end of the decade, approximately two-thirds of the jurisdictions offered some form of non-categorical licensure. Usually jurisdictions awarded licenses in both non-categorical areas and categorical areas.

Licensure requirements for early childhood special education teachers increased noticeably in the 1980s. These requirements parallel the development and enactment of P. L. 99-457 that extended the rights granted under P. L. 94-142 to 3-5 years olds with disabilities and created a grant program for services to infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Jurisdictions continued to require that general education teachers receive some preparation to educate students with disabilities. In the 1980s there was substantial growth in the number of jurisdictions with such a requirement.

In the late 1980s interest emerged in the standardized assessment of special education teacher candidates' knowledge of special education. This area of study reflected a concern about the performance of special educators and the quality of their preparation.

### *Licensure of Special Education Teachers in the 1990s and Beyond*

*Licensure in specific areas.* In 1997 Jenkins, Leigh, and Patton published an update on licensure standards for teachers of students with learning disabilities. They found that 29 jurisdictions licensed teachers in the “category of learning disability, or a close variation” (p. 274). Other jurisdictions issued some form of generic credential. Most jurisdictions issued licenses for grades K-12 for teachers of students with learning disabilities. Only nine jurisdictions issued licenses for distinct age ranges or grade levels. Twenty-six jurisdictions had competency standards for teachers of students with learning disabilities. Thirty-nine jurisdictions stipulated completion of a minimum number of hours of course work in special education and related areas. The number of hours of course work ranged from 16-50. Fourteen jurisdictions required that teachers of students with learning disabilities have licenses in general education. Although two-thirds (34) of the jurisdictions required that the teachers pass examinations in order to obtain licenses, only 13 jurisdictions required an examination in special education; and only four assessed candidates in the area of learning disabilities.

Kleinhammer, Geiger, and Morningstar (2003) completed a study of transition-related licensure structures and content requirements for teachers who provide transitional services for adolescents with disabilities. Documents related to jurisdictions' licensure structures and competencies or courses required for licensure were examined. Thirty-one jurisdictions had some form of credentialing structure for specializations in “secondary special education, transition, or special education-related vocational or adult education” (p. 192). Among the 31 jurisdictions 20 had licenses that focused on teaching adolescents with disabilities or secondary special education; and twelve had some form of licensure option that focused on transitional services for adolescents with disabilities provided by personnel with titles/roles such as transition specialist, vocational special needs specialist, vocational educator, or rehabilitation counselor. Thirty-five jurisdictions were identified as having transition-relevant requirements in at least one area of special education licensure.

*Categorical and non-categorical models of licensure.* In 1990 the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) reported information from 30 jurisdictions on accreditation standards used to approve programs for the preparation of special education teachers. The information was taken from the *Digest of Standards Relating to Personnel Preparation Programs in Special Education and*

*Related Services Issues by the States.* Fifteen jurisdictions reported using traditional, categorical structures. Twelve jurisdictions used a non-categorical approach, and four jurisdictions used non-categorical with some categorical accreditations. Eight jurisdictions offered accreditation for the preparation of special education teachers from 0-2 or 3-5. Seven jurisdictions reported accreditation for special education administrators.

Berkeley (1990) reported the results of a study of categorical and non-categorical models of licensure for special educators. Information was obtained from 41 jurisdictions. Seventeen jurisdictions offered categorical licenses for special educators. Twenty-four jurisdictions considered their licensure to be non-categorical; but 20 of these jurisdictions also reported one or more areas of categorical licensure.

The Fifth Edition of *The NASDTEC Manual on the Preparation and Certification of Educational Personnel* (2000) identified at least 42 states and the District of Columbia as issuing categorical special education credentials. Seven jurisdictions did not. The opposite was also reported. Forty-two jurisdictions issued some form of non-categorical credentials, and seven jurisdictions also reported that they did not issue non-categorical credentials in special education. Six jurisdictions issued generic K-12 licenses that covered all conditions and degrees of disability. Nine jurisdictions offered generic K-12 licenses based on the severity of disabilities, and most jurisdictions offered a generic credential in early childhood special education.

Mainzer and Horvath (2001) prepared a report on issues related to the preparation and licensure of special education teachers for the Professional Standards and Practices Committee of The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). They used data from the NASDTEC manual along with data compiled by CEC. They reported that when early childhood special education, deaf and hard of hearing, and blind and visually impaired are excluded from the analysis, only four states use a purely categorical framework for special education licensure. Twenty-four jurisdictions used only a “multicategorical framework (including generalist)” (p.4). Fourteen jurisdictions offered generic licenses in special education. Twenty-three jurisdictions used a combination of categorical and multicategorical approaches. The authors concluded that there was a clear trend toward multicategorical licensure of special educators.

Mainzer and Horvath noted that 60% of the jurisdictions issued mild/moderate multicategorical licenses to special education teachers to serve children with mental retardation, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, serious emotional disturbance, and specific learning disabilities. Jurisdictions that awarded licenses in severe/profound disabilities typically qualified special education teachers to serve primarily students with mental retardation and multiple disabilities.

*Required special education preparation for general education teachers.* In 1990 Patton and Braithwaite conducted a follow-up to their previous investigation of jurisdictions’ requirements for regular educators to complete courses in special education. The informants were licensure personnel in the 50 states, District of Columbia, and

Puerto Rico. Thirty-seven jurisdictions required special education coursework for initial licensure of general education teachers. Nine jurisdictions reported requirements for coursework in special education for the recertification of general education teachers. Their findings indicated that there had been substantial growth in the number of states requiring special education for general educators in the previous decade.

The following year Reiff, Evans, and Cass (1991) also provided information on required preparation in special education for general educators. Responses were received from all the states and the District of Columbia. Thirty-one jurisdictions required an introduction to special education course for elementary education teachers. An additional six jurisdictions had special education competency requirements but did not require specific coursework. The results were similar for secondary education teachers with one less jurisdiction requiring a course. The amount of required preparation ranged from one semester hour to 5 quarter hours; three semester hours were reported most frequently.

Jones and Black (1994) reported that 21 states required a class in exceptionalities for licensure in vocational education. Twenty-three jurisdictions had such a requirement for licensure in general education.

Katsiyannis, Conderman, and Franks (1995) examined states' practices regarding the preparation of general education teachers to include students with disabilities in general education environments. Thirty-nine jurisdictions responded to a question on required competencies specific to the inclusion of students with disabilities, six jurisdictions had such requirements for licensure. Sixteen jurisdictions were in the process of revising licensure requirements to address inclusion of students with disabilities.

*Comprehensive studies of special education licensure.* In 1993 Piercy and Bowen reported the results of surveys of licensure officers and of personnel responsible for states' comprehensive systems of personnel development within the 50 states and the District of Columbia. All jurisdictions reported that a minimum of a bachelor's degree awarded by a state-approved /accredited teacher education program was required for a license in special education. Additionally, nineteen jurisdictions required completion of specific courses for licensure; and eight jurisdictions required mastery of specific competencies.

Most jurisdictions (29) awarded freestanding licenses in special education. Eleven jurisdictions required a license in elementary or secondary education in order for a candidate to be licensed in special education.

When Piercy and Bowen asked respondents to speculate on anticipated changes in special education licensure that would occur within five years, a shift from highly categorical to less categorical licenses was mentioned frequently. Other predictions included an anticipated movement toward competency-based licensure requirements and implementation of assessment methodologies to verify acquisition of the identified competencies.

As part of their comprehensive study, Piercy and Bowen (1993) reported on assessment requirements for candidates for special education licenses. Eleven jurisdictions reported having required minimum grade point averages; 36 reported requiring basic skills tests; and 25 required specialty area tests. The authors concluded that the majority of states had adopted five types of requirements: 1) a college degree, 2) completion of an approved teacher preparation program, 3) experiences in working with students in classrooms, 4) passage of a basic skills examination, and 5) passage of either a specialty area examination or an examination of teaching-related content.

That same year Putnam and Habanek (1993) reported on jurisdictions' licensure requirements for teachers of students with mild disabilities. They obtained information on this topic from licensure officers. Results were organized by type of license and grade level. The categories of licensure for teachers of students having mild disabilities were not clear-cut. Twenty-six jurisdictions awarded licenses in learning disabilities, and the same number offered licenses in mental retardation. Twenty-eight jurisdictions reported awarding licenses in emotional disturbance. At the same time 32 jurisdictions issued generic licenses to teach students with mild/moderate disabilities. Several jurisdictions offered both categorical and non-categorical licenses for teachers of students with mild disabilities. The authors reported a variety of grade level configurations for special education licenses. Thirty-one jurisdictions used K-12 licenses (categorical or non-categorical) for teachers of students with mild disabilities. Two jurisdictions licensed special education teachers for grades 1-12 models. Thirteen jurisdictions used a variety of elementary age ranges for licensure. Two jurisdictions offered special education licenses at the middle grades (5-9) level, and five jurisdictions offered secondary level licenses that included the middle grades. Nine jurisdictions offered secondary special education licenses that did not include the middle grades.

Information was also obtained on whether jurisdictions required licensure in general education in order to obtain a license in special education. Fifteen jurisdictions had such a requirement.

In 1996, Steffens reported that 14 jurisdictions had licensure models for special education teachers that were solely categorical. She noted that 37 jurisdictions awarded a form of generic certification. Twenty-five of these jurisdictions offered only non-categorical licenses for teachers of students with mental retardation, learning disabilities, or emotional/behavioral disorders; the other 12 jurisdictions also awarded categorical licenses in these areas. Fourteen jurisdictions awarded only categorical licenses in the three areas. Twenty-five jurisdictions issued licenses in learning disabilities. Twenty-four jurisdictions issued licenses in mental retardation or a similar designation, and the same number issued licenses in the area of emotional disturbance or a comparable designation.

Steffens reported a K-12 pattern of licensure for special education teachers was used widely. Twenty-four jurisdictions issued K-12 licenses in special education, and another seven issued PreK-12 licenses. One jurisdiction issued a 1-12 license. Ten



jurisdictions offered different configurations of elementary, middle, or secondary special education licenses. A few jurisdictions awarded special education licenses for specific age/grade levels and Pre/K-12 licenses.

In 2002 Geiger published an update on requirements for the conventional licensure of special education teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Certification officers in jurisdictions were interviewed in order to gather current information of licensure requirements. Information was reported on the use of national standards in developing state standards; areas and levels of licensure in special education (including categorical and non-categorical options and licensure for early childhood special educators); required preparation in general education for special education teachers; required preparation in special education for general educators; and assessment requirements for special education teachers. Results related to each dimension examined were reported by jurisdiction. The author concluded that: 1) mixed (categorical and non-categorical licensure structures) were adopted by a substantial majority of the jurisdictions; 2) expansive age/grade levels for licensure of special educators were predominant; 3) some configuration of licensure in early childhood special education had been adopted by at least 80% of the jurisdictions; 4) approximately 90% of the jurisdictions required some form of preparation in special education for general education teachers; 5) many jurisdictions did not require preparation in general education curriculum or pedagogy for special education teachers; and 6) assessment requirements for candidates for special education licenses varied in scope and rigor.

*Licensure in early childhood special education.* In 1990 Bruder, Klosowski, and Daguio added to the information base on licensure in early childhood special education. Their study focused on licensure of professionals to serve infants and toddlers (0-3). They conducted a telephone survey of Part H (now Part C) coordinators in the fifty states and the District of Columbia. The survey addressed the credentialing processes for the 10 disciplines identified in P. L. 99-457. Four jurisdictions were identified as having licenses for special educators specific to birth to 3 years. Fifteen jurisdictions required “some type of certification for special educators providing services to children in a broader age category beginning at birth” (p. 12). A plurality of the jurisdictions reported three years as the earliest age for which licensed special educators were required. For 13 jurisdictions the earliest age was kindergarten. Twelve jurisdictions required graduate degrees for special educators in order to teach children 0-5 with disabilities, and some form of examination was required in 18 jurisdictions. Only one jurisdiction reported competency-based requirements for the preparation of early childhood special educators; all others had degree- or course-based requirements.

Berkeley (1990) reported 21 jurisdictions awarded separate licenses in early childhood special education. In seven of the jurisdictions, licensure for preschool instruction of students with disabilities was authorized through a categorical special education license that began at prekindergarten or kindergarten.

In 1995, Striffler provided an update on licensure requirements for early intervention teachers. Fourteen of the 47 jurisdictions from which information was obtained offered credentials for birth through 5 years. This was the most commonly

reported age range for licensing early childhood special educators. The next most common age range was birth through eight years or a comparable designation. Five jurisdictions offered credentials for teachers of infants and toddlers, ages birth through 3 years.

*Observations.* A mixture of categorical and non-categorical licensure options for special education teachers appeared to be commonly adopted by jurisdictions. Some form of all level licensure (PreK-12, K-12, 1-12) was also common. However, jurisdictions did offer special education licensure for more restricted age ranges of students with disabilities. A substantial majority of jurisdictions offered some form of specialized credential for early childhood special educators. Requirements that general education teachers receive some preparation to educate students with disabilities were prevalent, and research on jurisdictions' assessment requirements for licensure that emerged in the late 1980s was noticeably limited.

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