Evaluating "Quality" Methods of Filling the "Teacher Gap": Results of a Pilot Study with Early Career Teachers

Madelyn L. Isaacs, Ph.D.
Professor, Counseling
Florida Gulf Coast University

Elizabeth M. Elliott, Ph.D
Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education
Florida Gulf Coast University

Andrew McConney, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Research and Measurement
Florida Gulf Coast University

Patricia Wachholz, Ed.D.
Associate Dean and Professor, English Education
Florida Gulf Coast University

Patrick Greene, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Educational Technology
Florida Gulf Coast University

Marci Greene, Ed.D.
Dean and Professor, Special Education
Florida Gulf Coast University

Challenges for meeting the highly-qualified teacher demand, exacerbated by the critical shortage of teachers, have necessitated a variety of preparation routes for those entering the profession of teaching. This pilot study examined teacher confidence and self efficacy related to teacher preparedness within the first three years of employment. Specifically, the study examined preparation experience perceptions of early career teachers. All teachers who were employed three years or less from three Florida school districts were invited to participate. Data were analyzed and aggregated according to teacher preparation type – traditional or non-traditional (alternative) program. Participants indicated their likelihood of remaining in the program, district, and school as well as their degrees of confidence in preparation for the competencies identified. Overall results as well as differences between those who completed a traditional teacher preparation program and those with a non-traditional teacher preparation program are presented. Implications for training priorities and replicating research are discussed.

Alternative certification programs are not new to teacher education, they are however, unique in the broad range of traditional professional teacher preparation programs and their proliferation since the 1980's has been accelerating at a rapid pace (Legler, 2002; *Alternative teacher certification: A state by state analysis*, 2006.) When other professions faced similar shortages, alternative steps were taken to entice candidates into the professions without changes to preparation. However, in teacher education, the need for increased numbers of teachers is complicated by a variety of factors. Exacerbating the demand are a) assumptions concerning the efficacy of teachers who possess strong content knowledge, b) challenging schools and, c) mandates on teacher quality as outlined by No Child Left Behind legislation.

The increasing need for teachers has often led to erroneous assumptions regarding the kind of preparation that renders a teacher highly qualified. Alternate programs are based on a variety of assumptions (or misconceptions) that if one possesses content knowledge in an area, that person can quickly become an expert teacher in the classroom, the underlying belief being that knowledge of content is the most critical factor in becoming a teacher. Many assumptions have been made about alternative teacher education programs that have yielded mixed results when tested in the limited body of empirical research (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2006: Legler, 2002.)

This study assesses self-efficacy beliefs related to teacher tasks. According to Bandura (1986) self-efficacy beliefs may be strong predictors of related performance; in other words, the confidence people bring to specific tasks plays an important role in their success or failure to complete those tasks.

The goals of the pilot study were:

- To conduct a preliminary study to survey teachers in their first three years of teaching about their confidence in their preparation to accomplish practices aligned with Florida's Educator Accomplished Practices
- To test a preliminary survey instrument
- To identify differences in confidence in teachers in their first three years of teaching based on their route to teacher certification
- To identify areas that require strengthening in teacher preparation and induction programs
- To identify any differences in likelihood of remaining in the field and/or in their district or school based upon preparation path

Literature

There is no question that there is a national shortage of teachers. This is due to both rising enrollments and impending retirements. As we entered a new millennium, over thirty percent of the nation's three million public school teachers had passed the age of fifty (Young, 2003). Florida's growing shortages have been further expanded by both state-level legislation decreasing class sizes as well as 2002 federal legislation calling for a "highly qualified" teacher in every classroom. Moreover, incentives for early retirement in Florida increase demand too.

In an analysis of the teacher shortage, Ingersoll (2001) reviewed research on "teacher turnover" in general and suggests that efforts to curtail the shortage should focus not only on increasing the supply of teachers through recruitment, but also on retaining teachers currently in the system. When looking at characteristics of teachers

who leave and stay in teaching, Luekens, Lyter, and Chandler (2004) found that the highest percentages of teachers who leave do so within the first three years of teaching.

Nationally, approximately 30 percent of new teachers leave within the first three years; nearly fifty percent leave within five years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Shortages at schools are not a result of teachers leaving the profession entirely, but also, as a by-product, are the characteristics of schools themselves. Many new teachers leave undesirable teaching positions in search of more favorable jobs at other schools. About half of all teacher turnover is a result of migration, which, does not result in a net loss of teachers to the profession, but does create an uneven distribution of the shortage. The local migration pattern creates somewhat of a revolving door for high-minority, high-poverty schools, which is where newly alternatively certified teachers often find their entry-level positions, in what one would surmise are the most needy environments (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Traditional teacher education programs cannot fulfill the growing need for teachers, particularly in specific regions and states, and, in specific content areas (Yarger & Kasten, 2001). However, the problem is complex and not simply an issue of supply and demand. The public discussion surrounding alternative certification is best understood in the framework of the two confluent forces that fueled its creation: 1) an unprecedented and well-publicized scarcity of teachers and, 2) growing concerns over teacher quality. Nowhere are these two issues more apparent than in Florida schools.

According to the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), fewer than 23% of Florida's 8th graders reached the proficiency level in mathematics, compared to 27% of 8th graders nationwide.

In science, Florida had not participated in the NAEP assessment since 1996, but at that time, fewer than 21% of Florida's 8th graders achieved proficiency, compared to 27% of 8th graders nationally. If we have learned anything over the past twenty years, it is how much teachers matter to student learning. On this point, the research is clear: the teacher is the single most important factor in whether young people learn or whether they don't. In light of dismal performance statistics and burgeoning enrollment growth in student population, the schools in Southwest Florida now face the challenge of putting in every Florida classroom, well-qualified teachers who are prepared to teach the depth of content necessary to ready students to become productive citizens in the 21st Century.

A number of reports, including the 1996 report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, have pointed to the close relationship between student achievement and teachers' skills, knowledge, and practices. In Florida, the Education Standards Commission (ESC) operationalized this relationship by identifying 12 Educator Accomplished Practices (EAP's) that represent a high level of teacher proficiency. The 12 EAP's are based on a continuous quality improvement model that begins with preservice teacher preparation and continues through the educator's professional career, with the intention of promoting student achievement.

Thus, what teachers know and can do is crucial to what students learn. In the end, the classroom teacher becomes the focus in promoting student learning. Although few people debate the importance of staffing American classrooms with "highly-qualified" teachers, much debate surrounds *what* characteristics render a teacher "highly-qualified:" Is it subject matter knowledge,

innate intelligence, pedagogical knowledge, or experience? These important questions center the debate about whether alternative certification can address the teacher shortage while simultaneously maintaining high standards for teacher quality.

The models known as "alternative certification" differ significantly. The common thread is that most offer a fast-track preparation and expeditious entry into the classroom (Hawley, 1990). Typically, alternative certification programs also differ from traditional teacher preparation programs in that they give participants access to full-time, paid teaching positions prior to completion of the requirements for certification. The number of states offering such entrée to the teaching profession has grown from eight in 1983 to forty-six as of 2006 plus the District of Columbia has reported some type of alternative means of certifying teachers. The remaining four states have alternative plans under consideration. Thus, the pathways are numerous (Alternative Certification: A state by state analysis, 2006).

In 2003, states reported a total of 144 alternative routes outside the traditional college teacher education program for attaining certification (Feistritzer & Chester, 2003). Historically, the most important goal of alternative certification programs has been to speed up the placement of teachers into classrooms. Because of time constraints, traditional classroom activities, guided pedagogical development and supervised clinical practice have often been eliminated, rendering the intellectual underpinnings of professional teaching the victims of expediency (Yarger & Kasten, 2001).

Because alternative certification programs lack standardization, there remains a lack of large-scale research examining the effectiveness of such programs, with a few notable exceptions, such as

Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow (2002). However, a series of research efforts on smaller scales provide enough data for policymakers to begin to make conclusions regarding the efficacy of alternative models of preparation and the teachers who experience such preparation.

Probably the best-known body of research in this area has been reported by Darling-Hammond (1994, 1996, 1999, 2002). In 2001, the Abell Foundation, based in Baltimore, issued a report suggesting that there is "no credible research that supports the use of teacher certification as a regulatory barrier to teaching" and urging the discontinuation of certification in the state of Maryland. In return, the U.S. Secretary of Education cited the Abell Foundation paper in his Annual Report on Teacher Quality in 2002 as the sole source for concluding that teacher education does not contribute to teacher effectiveness. The Secretary's report recommended elimination of required education coursework from certification standards, and attendance at schools of education and student teaching be made optional.

Darling-Hammond (2002) reviewed the Abell Report and cited many inaccuracies. She concluded other issues facing teacher education need to be more fully addressed if all students are to be provided with highly qualified teachers. She further suggested that not only do alternative certification programs tend to produce poor quality teachers who lacked the necessary preparation to provide high-level instruction; teachers trained in alternative programs were, also, twice as likely to leave the profession within their first three years. In contrast, teachers prepared in traditional programs and extended five-year programs were four to five times more likely to remain in their positions. Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow (2002) also

noted that traditionally prepared teachers felt significantly better prepared than did those prepared through alternative programs or those without preparation. Gomez and Grobe (1990, cited in Darling Hammond, 1995) had a similar finding: alternatively prepared teachers were demonstrably less knowledgeable about teaching and from two to sixteen times more likely to be rated "poor" in teacher evaluations.

Furthermore, there is growing evidence that alternatively certified teachers are more likely to leave teaching after only a few years than are traditionally certified teachers. Darling-Hammond (1999) found that "type" of preparation for teaching was a predictor of retention; specifically, the average retention rate after three years of service for teachers who were trained in five-year programs was 84%, compared to 53% from four-year programs and 34% for those prepared by alternative licensure (Darling-Hammond, 1999). These findings mirror those of Shen (1997) who found that teachers with no training were three times as likely to leave the profession compared to teachers from traditional programs. An analysis of the reasons that teachers in Florida leave the profession (Feng, 2005) suggested that attrition occurred most frequently in early career teachers. It was also found that attrition was related to the achievement and behavior of students in the classes that teachers teach, which may be directly related to the teacher's degree of experience and efficacy in classroom management and instructional strategies.

Despite research on various models of alternative certification, researchers understand little about teachers' beliefs regarding their own competence as a teacher. Nor do researchers recognize the ways those beliefs may affect whether or not an alternatively certified teacher remains in the profession. Bandura (1986) writes that individuals possess a self-system that allows them to exercise some control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. These self-evaluations help determine how much effort people will expend on any activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will be in adverse situations. Against this backdrop of current research and thought on alternative certification, the pilot study examined those issues on through an adapted questionnaire that assessed the confidence of early career teachers using the Florida EAP's.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to provide a cross-sectional (one point in time) look at the satisfaction of early career teachers with their teacher preparation programs. This descriptive look was based on the various routes to certification currently available to prospective teachers in Florida, including traditional University based preparation programs and alternative certification. The study examined the impact of different methods of teacher preparation (and by extension, different routes to teacher certification) on the confidence and attitudes of early career teachers in Southwest Florida with specific competencies keyed to the 12 Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs). Another purpose was to estimate the comparative likelihood of these early-career teachers remaining in the profession. Development of a web-based survey accomplished the purpose (Appendix A).

The survey gauged the degree of satisfaction regarding their level of preparation reported by program completers. The survey was adapted from an instrument used for program evaluation and improvement

approved by Florida's Department of Education. The revised survey reflected the FEAPs, and specific aspects of one teacher preparation program.

Items on the instrument pertained to certification route, type of recruitment source, area and level of initial assignment, nature of assignment, stability of assignment, college/master's major, level of other experience with children or teaching type activities, and the likelihood of staying in teaching and/or moving to a specialty area (e.g. School Administration, Counseling, Curriculum Specialist). The completed instrument was uploaded to the University's on-line survey facility along with a cover page of invitation and informed consent.

Participants

The university serves five local school districts. Each of the districts was invited to participate in the study by providing email addresses for all teachers in their district who were in their first three years of teaching. Teachers who had more than three years total experience as teachers, regardless of location, were deemed ineligible. Four of the five districts responded. The fourth district requested a copy of the invitation with intentions of sending it out to their teachers themselves. Due to end of year scheduling conflicts, they ultimately declined participation. The fifth district, a small area, opted not to provide the email addresses of their very few new teachers. At the end of May 2005, the invitations were emailed to the 1800 early career teachers who were identified as meeting the criteria. Approximately 11% completed the survey.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS programs to identify descriptive and inferential statistics. Additionally, the results were analyzed to determine overall responses to determine if any differences in confidence existed between teachers who had completed traditional university teacher preparation and certification and those who had achieved certification through one of several available "alternative" routes.

Table 1 shows a total of 194 responses were obtained using an email invitation and web-based data collection system. Of these 114 are fully certified with 5 year professional certificates and one is a licensed therapist while the remaining 79 were certified though one of several alternative routes. Most respondents (177) indicated they were white.

Table 1

Participants based on Routes to Certification	Response Count	Percentage
State Issued Professional (5 years)	114	58.76 %
State Issued Temporary (3 years)	67	34.54 %
Licensed Therapist	1	0.52 %
Expert in the Field (No Cert)	1	0.52 %
District Issued Vocational (5 years)	3	1.55 %
District Issued Temporary (3 years)	8	4.12 %
Totals	194	

Most teachers obtained their jobs by applying directly to the district or through a particular school with a very few (11) obtaining their jobs at statewide career fairs or out of state recruiting activities. No differences in obtaining their position, based on certification route, appeared to exist. It is interesting to note, however, that many identified substitute teaching or interning at a school as a frequent method of "getting known," for the purpose of influencing the hiring process.

Table 2 displays results for items concerning future career and employment

intentions. A large majority (173 or 90%) of those surveyed think it is likely or very likely that they would remain in teaching and in their district (90%). However fewer (76%) thought they would remain in their current school. Almost two-thirds (62%) indicated that they would add another teaching specialty to their certification, with a larger percentage of those alternatively certified seeking to add a specialty than those traditionally certified.

Table 3 presents results concerning degree of confidence overall and by certification route. The table also outlines the degree of confidence aligned with the 12 FEAPS: lesson planning, behavior management, organization, teaching to literacy, time management, using technology, critical thinking, assessment of student learning, and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

learning styles, teaching diverse populations, maintaining a safe environment, promoting FEAPS: lesson planning, behavior management, organization, teaching to learning styles, teaching diverse populations, maintaining a safe environment, promoting literacy, time management, using technology, critical thinking, assessment of student learning, and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

In terms of teaching competencies, most respondents felt very prepared or prepared in every area. However, there were variations among these competencies overall and also based on preparation route. In terms of lesson planning, almost three quarters (73%) felt prepared or very prepared, with traditionally certified teachers responding most positively (85% as opposed to 66% of alternatively certified teachers.) As well, 47% of traditionally trained teachers responded with feeling very prepared but only 26% of those alternatively certified indicated

similar confidence. Overall, teachers are less confident about their preparation for long-term lesson planning with only 58% overall and 61% of traditionally prepared teachers feeling confidence.

Fifty-nine percent (59%) overall felt prepared or very prepared to manage behavior with 61% of traditionally prepared teachers and 56% of alternatively prepared teachers reporting feeling prepared.

The questionnaire item concerning organizing learning activities showed 68% feeling prepared or very prepared and a slightly larger percentage (72%) of traditionally prepared teachers indicating confidence about organizing learning activities. Three quarters (75%) of traditionally prepared teachers felt prepared to promote and develop literacy while only 55% of those alternatively certified believe they are prepared to promote and develop literacy. Teachers were positive (63%) about their preparation to teach to a variety of learning styles but there was disparity between the two routes to preparation; 72% of traditionally certified teachers and only 44% of alternatively certified teachers. The differences between the two groups was statistically significant at the .038 level for organizing learning and .000 for both promoting and teaching literacy and teaching to a variety of learning styles. Only one third of teachers overall (33%) felt prepared to teach students who were learning disabled with a disparity between traditionally and alternatively certified teachers of 39% and 24% respectively (which is significant at the .006 level). Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondents felt confident about maintaining a safe environment with the disparity between the two groups at 89% of traditionally certified teachers and 76% alternatively certified teachers feeling prepared (significant at the .014 level.)

Table 2
Future Career and Employment Intentions Overall and Based on Route
to Certification

	Extremely Likely	Likely	Not Likely	Somewhat likely	Uncertain at this time	Total
Remain in Teaching?						
N	132	41	3	7	11	193
	68%	21%	2%	4%		
Traditional	81	21	2	5	5	114
	71%	18%	2%	4%	4%	
Alternative	51	20	1	2	6	80
	65%	25%	1%	3%	8%	
Remain in Present School?						
N	99	48	25	5	17	194
	51%	25%	13%	3%	9%	
Traditional	62	26	13	3	10	114
	54%	23%	11%	3%	9%	
Alternative	37	22	12	2	7	80
	47%	28%	15%	3%	9%	
Remain in Current District?						
N	131	43	9	2	9	194
	68%	22%	5%	1%	5%	
Traditional	81	22	6		5	114
	71%	19%	5%		4%	
Alternative	50	21	3	2	4	79
	63%	27%	4%	3%	5%	
Add another specialty?						
	66	55	35	16	22	194
	34%	28%	18%	8%	11%	
Traditional	37	28	23	13	13	114
	32%	25%	20%	11%	11%	
Alternative	29	27	12	3	9	79
	37%	34%	15%	4%	11%	

Table 3
Cross-tabulations and Comparisons of Means for Competency Areas

	Very Prepared	Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Unprepared	N	Mean	Levene's F-Test results	T-Test results Two tailed
Lesson Planning	71	70	40	12	193	3.25	.14	**.000**
	37%	36%	21%	6%				
Traditional	53	43	13	5	114	3.63		
	47%	38%	11%	4%				
Alternative	18	27	27	7	79*	2.70		
	23%	34%	34%	9%				
Long-term Lesson Planning	47	75	46	25	193	2.74	**.001**	**.000**
	24%	39%	24%	13%				
Traditional	35	49	24	6	114	2.99		
	31%	43%	21%	5%				
Alternative	12	26	22	19	79	2.39		
	15%	33%	28%	24%				
Behavior Management	40	73	48	22	193	2.68	.533	.095
	21%	38%	25%	11%				
Traditional	28	41	36	9	114	2.77		
	25%	36%	32%	8%				
Alternative	12	32	22	13	79	2.54		
	15%	41%	28%	16%				
Organize Learning	49	83	51	10	193	2.88	.710	.038
	25%	43%	26%	5%				
Traditional	36	45	29	4	114	2.99		
	32%	40%	25%	4%				
Alternative	13	38	22	6	79	2.73		
	16%	48%	28%	8%				
Teach to a Variety of Learning Styles	57	64	56	16	193	2.84	**.050**	**.000**
	30%	33%	29%	8%				
Traditional	41	41	27	5	114	3.04		
	36%	36%	24%	4%				
Alternative	16	23	29	11	79	2.56		
	20%	29%	37%	14%				
Teach Students Who are Learning Disabled	28	53	72	40	193	2.36	.136	**.006**
	15%	27%	37%	21%				
Traditional	21	35	40	18	114	2.52		
	18%	31%	35%	16%				
Alternative	7	18	32	22	79	2.13		

	Very Prepared	Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Unprepared	N	Mean	Levene's F-Test results	T-Test results Two tailed
	9%	23%	41%	28%				
Teach Students who are ESOL	22	41	53	67	193	2.09	.121	**.009**
	11%	21%	27%	35%				
Traditional	17	27	38	32	114	2.25		
	15%	24%	33%	28%				
Alternative	5	14	26	34	79	1.87		
	6%	18%	33%	43%				
Maintain a Safe Learning Environment	75	86	26	6	193	3.20	.688	**.014**
	39%	44%	21%	7%				
Traditional	51	50	10	3	114	3.31		
	45%	44%	9%	2%				
Alternative	24	36	16	3	79	3.03		
	30%	46%	20%	4%				
Promote and Develop Literacy	61	70	45	17	193	2.90	.111	**.000**
	32%	36%	23%	9%				
Traditional	47	39	24	4	114	3.13		
	41%	34%	21%	4%				
Alternative	14	31	21	13	79	2.58		
	18%	39%	27%	16%				
Manage Time	48	77	47	21	193	2.78	**.048**	.062
	25%	40%	24%	11%				
Traditional	31	49	25	9	114	2.89		
	27%	43%	22%	8%				
Alternative	17	28	22	12	79	2.63		
	22%	35%	28%	15%				
Use Technology to Enhance Teaching	40	67	60	26	193	2.93	.124	.149
	21%	35%	31%	13%				
Traditional	22	38	34	20	114	2.54		
	19%	33%	30%	18%				
Alternative	18	29	26	6	79	2.75		
	23%	37%	33%	8%				
Incorporate Critical Thinking	45	96	45	7	193	2.93	**.038**	**.032**
	23%	50%	23%	4%				
Traditional	30	60	22	2	114	3.04		
	26%	52%	19%	2%				

	Very Prepared	Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Unprepared	N	Mean	Levene's F-Test results	T-Test results Two tailed
Alternative	15	37	22	5	79	2.78		
	20%	47%	28%	6%				
Develop Classroom Assessments	43	89	51	10	193	2.86	.198	**.001**
	22%	46%	26%	5%				
Traditional	34	51	26	3	114	3.02		
	30%	45%	23%	3%				
Alternative	9	38	25	7	79	2.62		
	11%	48%	32%	9%				
Communicate Effectively with all Stockholders	71	86	30	6	193	3.15	.442	**.044**
	37%	45%	16%	3%				
Traditional	45	54	13	2	114	3.25		
	40%	47%	11%	2%				
Alternative	26	32	17	4	79	3.01		
	33%	41%	22%	5%				
Maintain Standards for Ethical/ Professional Behavior	114	66	11	1	193	3.50	.082	.313
	59%	34%	6%	1%				
Traditional	69	39	6	0	114	3.55		
	61%	34%	5%	0%				
Alternative	45	27	5	1	78	3.46		
	58%	35%	6%	1%				
Match Classroom Curriculum to Standards (FCAT)	28	42	20	15	105	2.79	.534	**.046**
	27%	40%	19%	14%				
Traditional	22	26	10	8	66	2.94		
	33%	39%	15%	12%				
Alternative	6	16	10	7	39	2.54		
	15%	41%	26%	18%				
Administer FCAT	34	41	18	19	112	2.81	.121	.997
	30%	37%	16%	17%				
Traditional	23	21	10	13	67	2.81		
	34%	31%	15%	19%				
Alternative	11	20	8	6	45	2.80		
	24%	44%	18%	13%				

	Very Prepared	Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Unprepared	N	Mean	Levene's F-Test results	T-Test results Two tailed
Use FCAT Results to Modify Teaching	20	38	22	27	107	2.47	.489	.1
	19%	36%	21%	25%				
Traditional	15	23	11	15	64	2.59		
	23%	36%	17%	23%				
Alternative	5	15	11	12	43	2.30		
	12%	35%	26%	28%				

*Note: one respondent among the alternatively certified teachers did not complete sections of the questionnaire concerning preparation confidence.

Almost two-thirds (65%) felt prepared to manage time with disparity between the two groups at 70% and 57%. Only slightly more than half (56%) of new teachers overall felt prepared to use technology to enhance teaching with the disparity between the routes reversed from other responses. Alternatively certified teachers (60%) felt prepared at a greater rate than traditionally certified teachers (52%).

Almost three quarters (73%) of respondents felt prepared to incorporate critical thinking into their teaching with 79% of traditionally certified teachers feeling prepared and 67% of those alternatively certified (the difference of which is significant at the .032 level). Two thirds (68%) of teachers reported they felt prepared to develop classroom assessments. This area has one of the largest disparities with 75% of traditionally certified teachers as opposed to 59% of alternatively certified new teachers (significant at the .001 level).

One area where teachers felt highly prepared was communicating effectively with stakeholders (82% overall) and 87% of traditionally certified teachers and 74% of alternatively certified teachers (significant at the .044 level). Maintaining standards for ethical/professional behavior was an area of strong feelings for respondents where 93% overall (of which 59% indicated feeling very prepared) and virtually no difference between the groups based on certification route.

Two thirds of all respondents felt prepared to match classroom curriculum with the FCAT standards and to administer the FCAT. Seventy-two percent (72%) of traditionally certified teachers and 56% of alternatively certified teachers confident about matching curriculum (with significant differences at the .040 level) and even percentages regarding administering the testing. Only slightly more than half of the respondents (55%) felt prepared to use FCAT results to modify teaching with 59% of traditionally prepared teachers and 47% of alternatively certified teachers feeling prepared.

The area of weakest confidence was teaching students who were identified as ESOL (speakers of English as a second language) with only one-third (32%) feeling

very prepared or prepared. However, a major difference (statistical significance at the .009 level between traditionally certified teachers (40%) indicating feeling prepared or very prepared) and alternatively certified teachers (25%) indicating feeling prepared or very prepared.

Discussion

The size of the sample restricts the generalizability of the findings. The small sample and the high level of attrition typically found among early career teachers may reflect early career teachers in general or may be indicative of attitudes among those who are most serious about remaining in the profession. If that is the case, these results are important in addressing the training and initial induction needs of those least likely to leave during their first three years of service. Furthermore, research examining the connection between self-efficacy beliefs and teacher retention might provide a window into the kinds of supports needed to positively influence the rates of teacher retention.

Preliminary conclusions indicate that new teachers in this small sample were generally positive about their feelings of preparedness to perform tasks associated with the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices and that they would remain in teaching and in their districts. For all early career teachers participating in the study, there are several areas that appear to require increased attention in preparation and continuing training/mentoring. They include:

- Teaching ESOL students (32% felt prepared or very prepared)
- Teaching students who are learning disabled (42% felt prepared or very prepared)
- Modifying teaching based on FCAT results (55% felt prepared or very prepared)

- Using technology to enhance teaching (56% felt prepared or very prepared)
- Behavior management (59% felt prepared or very prepared).

There were differences in confidence in preparation between teachers who had achieved their certification by a traditional route and by those who were certified by alternate route. On all but one item, those trained through a traditional route were more positive about feeling prepared or very prepared than their alternatively trained counterparts. On many of these items the difference was statistically significant (using a two-tailed test and a .05 cut-off appropriate for a preliminary pilot study), including lesson planning, long term lesson planning, organizing learning activities, teaching to a variety of learning styles, teaching students who are learning disabled, teaching English language learners; maintaining a safe learning environment; promoting and developing literacy; incorporating critical thinking, developing classroom assessments, communicating effectively with all stakeholders and matching classroom curriculum to state standards. This suggests that alternatively certified teachers require more preparation and/or continuing training/mentoring in these areas.

Based on the initial findings there are several recommendations that come forward:

- Conduct a state-wide large scale study using a similar instrument with all teachers who are in their first three years of teaching.
- Refine questionnaire to target specific competencies and information about preparation.
- Find ways to triangulate results by developing a parallel questionnaire or interview format for supervising administrators.

- Include more data concerning the route to certification/preparation for each type of certification route.
- Strengthen preparation standards and opportunities to develop confidence for new teachers who enter the profession through an alternative route.
- Improve training for all new teachers in several key areas and target alternatively certified new teachers for continuing training/mentoring in areas where their confidence lags behind the confidence in preparation of traditionally trained teachers.

This research contributes to understanding, the development of and the retention of, early career teachers. Furthermore, it contributes to understanding the impact traditional and alternative teacher preparation programs have on teacher success, and ultimately, on student learning outcomes. Finally, expanding this research to a broader sample to verify these results becomes paramount.

Appendix A Instrument
Early Career Teacher Preparation and Retention Questionnaire

A comparative look at teachers' views on the efficacy of their various routes to certification, for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year teachers in the 5-county area of SW Florida.

1) Please indicate your gender:
   a) Male
   b) Female

2) Please indicate your ethnicity:
   a) White
   b) African American
   c) Hispanic
   d) Native American
   e) Asian

3) School District In which district do you work?
   a) Charlotte County School District
   b) Collier County School District
   c) Lee County School District
   d) Other:

4) Route Please indicate your route to teacher certification:
   a) State Issued Professional (5 years)
   b) State Issued Temporary (3 years)
   c) Licensed Therapist
   d) Expert in the Field (No Cert)
   e) District Issued Vocational (5 years)
   f) District Issued Temporary (3 years)

5) Certification—What is your area of certification?

6) Current Employment—What is the name of the School where you are currently employed?

7) Initial Employment—What is the name of the school where you were initially employed, if different from your current school?

8) Subject—What is the subject area in which you are currently teaching?

9) Initial subject—What is the subject area of your initial assignment, if different from your current assignment?

10) Grade level—What Grade level(s) are you currently teaching?

11) Initial Grade Level—What was the grade level of your initial assignment, if different from your present assignment?

12) Assignment Change—If there has been a change in school or assignment, please tell us how that came about.

13) Undergrad Major—What was your college undergraduate major?

14) Masters Major—What was your master's degree major, if applicable?

15) Recruitment Route—What was the route through which you were recruited into your present teaching position?
   a) I applied directly to the district
   b) I applied through a special recruiting fair, locally
   c) I applied through a special recruiting fair, statewide
   d) I applied through a special recruiting fair, out-of-state
   e) I applied through on-line recruiting activities

f) I applied through a University sponsored program
g) Other, specify

Please rate the following 5 statements as they currently apply to you!
   a) Not Likely
   b) Somewhat Likely
   c) Uncertain at this time
   d) Likely
   e) Extremely Likely

16) I plan to remain in teaching

17) I plan to remain in my current assignment

18) I plan to remain in my current school

19) I plan to remain in my current district

20) I plan to add another area of certification or specialty

21) Career Change—If you are planning a change in career or assignment, please indicate the reason(s) for it.

22) Other experience—Please specify your other experience with children or other teaching type activities, if any.

For each of the following statements about what teachers do, please rate the degree to which you feel that you were prepared by your program.
   a) Unprepared
   b) Somewhat Prepared
   c) Prepared
   d) Very Prepared

23) Develop daily lesson plans for classroom instruction

24) Develop long-term lesson plans for classroom instruction

25) Manage student behavior in the classroom

26) Organize the classroom in a manner that will foster learning for all children

27) Teach to a variety of learning styles

28) Teach students who are learning disabled

29) Teach students who speak English as a second language

30) Maintain a safe learning environment in the classroom
31) Promote and develop literacy using a variety of methods

32) Manage time in terms of lesson planning, grading, parent interactions, etc.

33) Use technology to enhance instruction and assessment

34) Incorporate critical thinking into instruction and assessment

35) Develop classroom assessment methods and link them to support student learning

36) Effectively communicate with children, their families, and other educators

37) Maintain educator standards for professional and ethical behavior

Please answer the following 3 items ONLY if your area of assignment includes FCAT testing. If not, please skip to the next section.

38) Ensure that classroom curriculum matches the standards being tested by the FCAT

39) Administer the FCAT exam

40) Use FCAT results to modify or adapt instruction for each student

For the each of the following areas of teaching, please check in the appropriate column if you believe that you did not receive any preparation whatsoever, or if you did receive preparation but believe it was not helpful (check as many as apply).
   a) No preparation received in this area
   b) Preparation received but not helpful

41) Assessment of student learning

42) Communication

43) Continuous improvement

44) Critical thinking

45) Teaching students who have special needs

46) Teaching students who have English as a second language

47) Ethics

48) Human development and learning

49) Classroom management

50) Technology

51) Identifying/using resources in the school (behavior specialist or occupational therapist)

52) Please list any areas in which you would like to receive more support from your school.

53) Does the way in which a teacher achieves certification affect the way one is received and/or respected by teachers at your school?
 a) Yes
 b) No

54) If "Yes" please explain.

55) Does the way in which a teacher achieves certification affect the way one is received and/or respected by building administrators at your school?
 a) Yes
 b) No

56) If "Yes" please explain.

57) If you could do it over again, would you take the same route to the teacher certification?
 a) Yes
 b) No

58) If "No" please explain

59) Please describe your teaching environment

60) If you have engaged in post-certification training through district professional development or university courses, and have found one or more of these especially helpful, please list below.

61) If you have any other comments about your teaching preparation and/or initial teaching experience that you would like to share, please use the space below.

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