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Secondary Special Educators: Perspectives of Preservice Preparation and Satisfaction

Emily C. Bouck

Abstract: *This study addressed special education teachers' perspectives of secondary special education for students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities. Secondary special education teachers responded to a survey regarding teacher preparation and teacher satisfaction. Results from the study suggested that changes need to be made to preservice preparation, as a low percentage of teachers had experience working with secondary special education students prior to their first position. Changes in preservice preparation are also necessary to resolve the lower levels of satisfaction teachers reported for programs serving students with mild mental impairment than those serving students with learning disabilities. Overall issues of secondary special education preparation need to continue to be examined.*

Preservice Preparation

One of the most pressing concerns surrounding special education is to ensure there are highly qualified teachers for every student, exacerbated by the recent *No Child Left Behind* federal legislation (Branstad et al., 2002; Goldstein, 2004; NCLB, 2002). Whether attributed credit or blamed (see Lyon et al., 2001), teachers are intricately linked to the success of their students. The value of teachers has been aptly summarized by O'Shea and colleagues (2000), "Whether in special or general education, there is a growing consensus that the single most important influence in education, is a well-prepared, caring, and qualified adult" (p. 72).

While having highly qualified teachers is important for all students, across grade levels, and within general or special education, there are good reasons to examine the preparation of secondary special education teachers in comparison to elementary special education teachers (Edgar, 1987). Elementary special ed-

ucation predominates the focus in research, and it also tends to be the main focus in undergraduate teacher preparation programs (Schumaker, Deshler, Bulgren, Davis, Lenz, & Grossen, 2002). To illustrate this predominance, a review of the articles published in the *Journal of Special Education* and *Exceptional Children* between 2000 and 2004 revealed that only 6 out of the 84 articles (7%) in the *Journal of Special Education* explicitly focused on just secondary students or adolescents. In *Exceptional Children*, 23 out of 112 (21%) were found to match this criterion, and most of these focused on transition. Boudah, Greenwood, and Logan (2001) also reported that four of five research-to-practice models in special education sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education focused on elementary-level settings, while the fifth involved secondary school settings.

In reviewing the preparation of preservice teachers, O'Shea & O'Shea (1997) commented on the consistency across teacher preparation programs and the programs themselves across time. They implied that preservice programs failed to keep pace with the changing roles and functions of special

Please address all correspondence to the author at A-715 Wells Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824, (517) 432-2870 or boucke@msu.edu.

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education teachers and were not leading the movement. The authors hypothesized that more preparation was done on the job than during preservice education. O'Shea and O'Shea (1997) also noted that in many teacher education programs preservice teachers were prepared to only teach particular age groups, particular disabilities, and/or particular content areas.

Preservice preparation has assumed a heightened position following the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation and the connection made between student outcomes, teacher accountability, and accountability of institutions of higher education (Branstad et al., 2002; NCLB, 2002). Research has documented connections between teacher preparation and student outcomes (e.g. Monk, 1994). Monk (1994) found that the more courses in a content area completed by teachers during their teacher education programs, the better their students performed on assessments in those areas.

The issues of teacher accountability, student outcomes, and preservice preparation becomes a greater issue as currently no state requires secondary special education teachers to pass exams or complete coursework related to the content areas they teach (Olson, 2004). The *No Child Left Behind* legislation first stipulated that special educators, along with their general education peers, had to be highly qualified in any core content area they taught alone (Branstad et al., 2002; NCLB, 2002). Recent changes in the law have allowed flexibility to certain classifications of teachers, such as teachers in rural districts, science teachers, and special education teachers (US Department of Education, 2004). However, concern exists over having students who at most risk being taught in core content areas by teachers who may or may not have undergraduate preparation in that area. In an article in the "The State of Special Education" from *Education Week*, Olson (2004) quoted an advocate, who addressed this very issue, stating:

As long as we have youngsters with special education teachers certified in non-content-based areas, there's no surprise why these youngsters aren't learning the algebra, or geometry, or trigonometry, or whatever they need to know in order to meet the same standards as other kids.

Given the current political frameworks surrounding education (i.e. *No Child Left Behind*, *President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education*), it is important to understand teachers' perspectives on their undergraduate preparation and their satisfaction with the field. Teachers, who are now more accountable than ever for the achievement of their students, must be allowed to express their opinions on preservice preparation, as their voice cannot be ignored from the political debate that surrounds special education.

Research Questions

This manuscript discusses a component of a larger project which involved a survey on issues within secondary special education. The larger project focused on secondary special education teachers' perspectives of curriculum and instructional environments for students with mild mental impairment¹ and learning disabilities, as well as critical aspects of the profession, such as preservice preparation, professional development, satisfaction, and areas of improvement. This article focuses on two of the critical aspects of the profession—preservice preparation and satisfaction with the educational programming for students—from the perspectives of secondary special education teachers for students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities. The research questions guiding this analysis of the survey included:

1. What is the preservice preparation of secondary special education teachers and what are their levels of satisfaction with their preparation in terms of educating students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities?
2. How satisfied are teachers with the education programs provided for secondary students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities at their school?

¹ In this state, mild mental impairment refers to a student with a developmental rate at or below two standard deviations, but at or above three standard deviations below the mean as determined through intellectual assessment, has an impairment of adaptive behavior, and these impairments adversely affect his/her educational performance (MI Department of Education, 2002).

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Table 1.

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D
Actual Number of Eligible Schools	174	162	162	95
Number of Surveys Sent*	111	103	103	60
Number of Surveys Received	67	56	45	21
% Return Based on Total Sample	35.4%	29.6%	23.8%	11.1%
% Return Based on Proportional Sampling	60%	54%	44%	35%

* Number of surveys sent is based on a proportion from the number of eligible schools in each class, with the sample size to represent a 95% confidence interval with a $\pm 3\%$ sampling error with a 50/50 split, which means "the population is relatively varied" (Salent & Dillman, 1994).

Method

Participants

Three-hundred seventy-eight secondary special education teachers in Grades 9–12 in a Midwestern state were mailed surveys to complete. Participants were selected from a population size of 593 eligible schools and the 378 surveyed represents a 95% confidence level with a $\pm 3\%$ sampling error (see Salant & Dillman, 1994; Fowler, 2002). The 593 eligible schools were determined by screening all schools and excluding all non-public and specialty schools were excluded, including Parochial, Charter or Academy schools. The 378 teachers were distributed proportionally across the states' High School Athletic Association classification code of school size: A, B, C, and D. Class A represented all high schools with an enrollment of 1008 and above, class B represented all high schools with an enrollment between 488 and 1007, class C represented high schools with an enrollment between 243 and 487, and class D represented high schools with an enrollment of 242 and below (MHSAA, 2002). Originally of the 593 eligible schools, 174 schools met eligibility in class A, 162 in both class B and class C, and 95 in class D. Using proportional sampling, from the sample size of 378 schools, 111 surveys were mailed to schools in class A, 103 to schools in both class B and C, and 61 to schools in class D (see Table 1). Schools in all four classes who met the eligibility criterion were randomly selected, with each eligible school district

having an equal chance of being in the sample.

Procedure

A letter was first mailed to the high school principal in each selected school (see Appendix A). The letter asked the administrator to distribute the survey to the special education teacher in his or her high school who was the most appropriate individual to respond to questions on secondary special education for students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities based on the characteristics outlined in the letter. These characteristics included: fully certified in special education, taught three or more years for the district, and experience teaching students with mild mental impairment. This letter was to help ensure that the most knowledgeable teacher received the survey and provided the most accurate information.

Two weeks after the mailing of the survey, a postcard reminder was sent to all individuals in the sample thanking those who had returned the completed survey and asking those who had not to please do so. Another mailing was then sent two weeks later for any individuals in the sample who had not yet returned the survey. The postcard stressed the importance of their input and the value of their contribution. The final follow-up consisted of either a phone call or an e-mail to the principals of schools who had not returned the survey and occurred three months after the initial mailing.

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The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument (see Appendix B) used by Conderman and Katsiyannis (2002) in their statewide assessment of instructional issues and practices in secondary special education formed the basis for this survey's questions; however, original questions were generated and peers and established professionals within the field of special education supplied feedback and suggestions. A draft survey was field-tested with ten secondary special education teachers to check clarity of the questions and remove or revise any that were unclear or failed to gather the intended information. In general, the survey involved teachers selecting from a list of options (i.e. multiple choice or 5-point likert scale questions) or short answer.

The survey was divided into four sections. The first section requested demographic information, including school size; geographical classification; gender; highest degree obtained; years of teaching experience teaching, in general education, special education, secondary special education, within current district, and in current position; teaching certification and/or special education endorsements held; number of students in each class or hour by category; and the setting or role of the teacher for each hour of the school day in conjunction with the activities performed during that time. This section was comprised of 12 questions. The second section² addressed curriculum and instructional environments for students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities and consisted of 11 questions.

The third section, consisting of five questions, requested information on teachers' perceived effectiveness and provider satisfaction in terms of special education for students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities. Perceptions of the effectiveness of the following components were asked for both categories of students: transition, social/emotional development, functional academics, content instruction, and life skills. Teachers ranked options for improving their classroom instruction, using

the following categories of improvement: more appropriate curricula, more preparation time, teach classes to one disability label, in-service preparation in classroom management, in-service preparation in more appropriate and powerful instructional methods, and in-service preparation in transition instruction.³

The last section asked questions about teacher preparation and professional development and involved eight questions. Participants indicated whether they had any courses or practicum experience with specific categories within special education (mild mental impairment and learning disabilities) and specific grade levels, such as secondary. Teachers also indicated if they had professional development on specific topics and rated their perceived usefulness of these experiences. The topics included: positive behavior support, law and litigation, career preparation, specific disabilities, content area, and transition. These seven options were selected from some of the current "hot topics" in the field for secondary special education as well as issues discussed in the literature.⁴

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were completed on the survey responses and when applicable t-tests and effects sizes were calculated. Much of the data was categorical, and hence frequency data was reported. T-tests were reported when teachers were asked to differentiate between students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities. However, in general, data are reported in aggregate and therefore frequency counts are given.

Results

Demographic Information

One hundred eighty-nine surveys were returned, representing 50% of the 398 surveys that were mailed to secondary special education teachers in public high schools in the state. Of the 189 that were returned, 67

² Results from this section are not discussed in this article, but can be obtained from the author or see Bouck (in press).

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were from class A schools (35.4%), 56 from class B schools (29.6%), 45 from class C schools (23.8%), and 21 from class D schools (11.1%). Since the sample was stratified, a return of 67 schools from class A, from a possible 111, resulted in a 60% return rate. A return of 56 from class B out of a possible 103 resulted in a 54% return rate; 45 from a possible 103 for class C was a 44% return rate; and 21 out of 60 from class D was a 35% return rate (see Table 1). The highest return rates were from the larger schools, class A and class B, with the fewest returns from the smaller schools, particularly class D.

The majority of the sample respondents were female (82.4%), while 17.6% were male. Approximately 57% of the sample had a master's degree, while 37.4% had a bachelor's degree. Another 5.8% indicated that they had an Education Specialist degree or some other graduate degree. The mean number of years of teaching was 15.74; the mean number of years of teaching secondary special education was 11.52; and the mean number of years of teaching at the teacher's current position was 8.57.

In terms of endorsement, 45.7% of teachers indicated that their first endorsement was mental impairment, 33.7% emotional impairment, and 16.8% learning disability. Fifty-one percent of respondents held 2 endorsements and 12.2% of respondents held a third endorsement. Overall, 51.3% of respondents held an endorsement in mental impairment. The mean number of total special education students at schools across all 4 school size classifications was 108.51; the mean number of students with learning disabilities was 75.18; and the mean number of students with mild mental impairment was 14.63. The average number of students on a teacher's caseload was 16.18. The respective means for class A was 185.6 for total special education students, 123.7 for students with a learning disability, 24.26 for students with mild mental impairment, and 16.75 for the average teachers' caseload. For class B the means, respectively, were 83.13 for total special education students, 60.38 for students with a learning disability, 12.72 for students with mild mental impairment, and 15.21 for the average teachers' caseload. The means, re-

spectively, for class C were 58.83 for total special education students, 41.07 for students with a learning disability, 7.57 for students with mild mental impairment, and 16.27 for the average teachers' caseload. For class D they were 41.86 for total special education students, 32.9 for students with a learning disability, 4.43 for students with mild mental impairment, and 16.71 for the average teachers' caseload.

Teacher Preparedness

Variation existed in teachers' feelings of preparedness from their undergraduate program for their current position as a secondary special education teacher. Fewer than 50% (48.3%) of teachers felt very satisfied or satisfied with their undergraduate program in terms of its preparing them for becoming a secondary special education teacher. Almost one-fifth (19.5%) felt unprepared or very unprepared for their current position and approximately one-third (32.2%) were neutral.

Teachers also reported on courses and practicum experience in their undergraduate programs that prepared them for teaching secondary special education. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64.2%) indicated that they had courses in their teacher education program that addressed both students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities, resulting in about one-third of all respondents (35.8%) who either had courses with only one group or none, the latter being very rare. Less than half (48.1%) indicated practicum experience with both students with learning disabilities and mild mental impairment. Conversely, more than half did not have practicum experience with both populations prior to obtaining a job. Of the 189 respondents, 69.3% indicated that they had coursework that focused on high school (9–12) and 54.4% reported that they had practicum experience with a secondary population.

Teacher Satisfaction

The majority of teachers (68.6%) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the special education services at their school. Specifically, 17.2% reported that they were very satisfied and 51.6% re-

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ported that they were satisfied. Only 6.5% reported that they were unsatisfied. Over two-thirds of respondents were satisfied (50.5%) or very satisfied (19.8%) with the programs for students with learning disabilities. No teacher indicated that he/she was completely unsatisfied and only 8.2% indicated being unsatisfied with the programs for students with learning disabilities. Fewer teachers indicated satisfaction with the overall program for students with mild mental impairment at their school, than for both special education in general or the programs for students with learning disabilities. Over 60% indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with programs for students with mild mental impairment (11.9% very satisfied and 48.9% satisfied). However, almost 20% were unsatisfied with the programs for students with mild mental impairment offered at their school (16.9% unsatisfied and 1.6% very unsatisfied).

The satisfaction that teachers reported for various aspects of the program for students with mild mental impairment was fairly consistent across the five categories—transition, socio-emotional development, functional academics, content instruction, and life skills. However, approximately 10–15% of respondents reported that they were not satisfied with each of the five components for this population. The results were similar for teachers' satisfaction with programs for students with learning disabilities; although, fewer teachers indicated that they were unsatisfied with all five of the components (approximately 10%). The least satisfactory component of the program for students with learning disabilities was in the area of life skills, with about 19.6% of respondents indicating that they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with this component.

Teachers indicated different levels of satisfaction for special education programs for students with learning disabilities and students with mild mental impairment. The difference between the means of the satisfaction with programs for these two groups of students was statistically significant ($t(356) = 3.21, p < .01$), with a relatively medium effect size ($d = .37$). While the overall satisfaction with the programs differed for the two groups, components of the programs

also led to significant differences. More specifically, the difference in satisfaction for students with mild mental impairment and students with learning disabilities was statistically significant for two of the five components—content instruction and life skills instruction. Teachers indicated more satisfaction with content instruction for students with learning disabilities than students with mild mental impairment ($t(357) = 3.43, p < .001, d = .42$). The opposite occurred for life skills instruction as teacher satisfaction for life skills instruction for students with mild mental impairment was significantly higher than for students with learning disabilities ($t(356) = 2.76, p < .01, d = .37$).

Connecting Preservice Preparation to Teacher Satisfaction

A strong relationship between teachers' rating of the effectiveness of their preservice preparation programs and satisfaction of the special education programming offered at their schools for students was not found. A weak positive relationship was found between teachers feeling prepared and the satisfaction they indicated for the educational programming for secondary special education students at their school ($r = .203, p = .006$). This weak positive relationship between teachers indicating they felt more prepared from their undergraduate program and the rating of their satisfaction with the educational programming for students was also found for the educational programming for just students with learning disabilities ($r = .289, p < .000$). This indicated that as teachers rated their undergraduate program higher, they felt more satisfied with the educational programming offered for students with learning disabilities at their school. A statistically significant relationship was not found between teacher preparation and satisfaction with the educational programming for students with mild mental impairment ($r = .126, p = .1$).

Discussion

The survey results revealed findings that warrant discussion and further exploration. Answers were derived for each of the four research questions that were examined, in-

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cluding: (1) What is the preservice preparation of secondary special education teachers and what are their levels of satisfaction with their preparation in terms of educating students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities? and (2) How satisfied are teachers with the education programs provided for secondary students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities at their school?

The data on preservice preparation revealed a low percentage of teachers who had experience working with secondary special education students prior to their first position. While one of the cornerstones of the recent *No Child Left Behind* legislation is the goal of having a highly qualified teacher for every student (Branstad et al., 2002; Olson, 2004), having quality teachers has always been important. The data from this study revealed that just over half of respondents had experience with secondary students in undergraduate teacher education preparation prior to entering the work force. These low levels of preparation, indicating not having actual field experience with a variety of special education categories or in secondary settings, has been linked to research on burn-out and retention of special education teachers (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). Professional preparation matters in attracting and retaining special education teachers, which is one of the leading concerns for the field.

The data also revealed that teachers indicated lower levels of program satisfaction for students with mild mental impairment than students with learning disabilities, although the respondents did not indicate why. A synthesis of “advances attributable to special education research” in an article by Greenwood and Abbott (2001) may suggest why special education teachers feel more satisfaction with programs for students with learning disabilities than students with mild mental impairment—more research-validated practices exist (p. 3). The authors highlighted research-based programs that benefited special education students. Greenwood and Abbott (2001) named multiple research-validated interventions for students with learning disabilities, such as the Strategies Intervention Model, Classwide Peer Tutoring, and specific reading strategies. Yet, for stu-

dents with mental impairment, only one strategy was given, and that was common for all students with mild, moderate, or severe mental impairment. The strategy listed as a development attributable to research was “effective strategies for teaching meal preparation to youth with mental retardation, so they can learn to make a sandwich, fix a boil-in-a-bag item, or bake canned biscuits” (Greenwood & Abbott, 2001, p. 3).

Limitations, Future Directions, & Implications

There are several limitations with this survey and its research design that warrant attention. First, this survey of secondary special education for students with mild mental impairment and learning disabilities was mailed together with another survey of secondary special education, which addressed high incidence disabilities and teacher preparation. The joint mailing of surveys may have negatively affected the return rate of this survey, as some participants when contacted during follow-ups commented that they had already filled out one (i.e. the one on high incidence disabilities and teacher preparation). Another limitation is that the data contain self-reports by teachers, and the accuracy of self-report data needs to be taken into consideration. The possibility exists that teachers may report either what they believe the researcher wants, what they feel their district would want them to say, or something that would make them look like better teachers and thus preserve their self-concept. Finally, the results of this study are limited to one state and generalizability may not be possible.

Future research should explore secondary special education preparation in greater depth. Specifically, if having highly qualified teachers for every student is a national goal and special education teachers are reporting that they do not feel very prepared in their preservice programs for secondary positions, then the field needs to critically analyze its preparation programs. This analysis needs to include programs across the country that prepare teachers for secondary special education positions. Furthermore, any research on preservice or inservice special education

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teachers needs to be disaggregated for secondary and elementary teachers; these two groups can no longer be considered as one. Additionally, research needs to examine these issues with respect to school size. Clearly different rates of return were found across school size, and that in itself raises a question; were fewer surveys returned from smaller schools because the teachers there have more responsibilities as there is less staff? This issue, as well as the impact of school size and location on teachers' feelings of preparation and satisfaction with educational programming for students, needs to be examined.

A national effort should examine teachers' perspectives of the field, particularly in the areas of preparation and its relationship to teacher satisfaction, particularly at the secondary level. The political and educational climates have created a "perfect storm" that warrants examination of secondary special education at this time. Given the emphasis on accountability, a move towards grading teacher preparation institutions, the poor post-school outcomes of special education graduates, and the increased demands on teachers, it is a critically important time to study the state of secondary special education.

It seems obvious that more preservice and inservice preparation in content areas must be provided to secondary special education teachers, particularly given the *No Child Left Behind* legislation and its emphasis on accountability and access to the general education curriculum for all students (Branstad et al., 2002). Less than 30% of teachers received this as a professional development opportunity, despite research that shows these teachers are teaching core academics classes (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002). This study replicated areas noted in previous research across the years and regions regarding how to improve practice and it would appear that now is the time for teachers and researchers to seriously collaborate on improving special education practice.

In conclusion, as federal law mandating special education (i.e. IDEA) approaches its 30 year anniversary, the field must continue its next steps forward. Access to education for students with disabilities has been

achieved for the most part and federal legislation is currently addressing outcomes and accountability (i.e. IDEA, 1997; NCLB, 2002). Now special education must focus on its most valuable resource, teachers—teacher preparation and professional development. Research has documented that teachers are extremely influential in the achievement of their students (see Darling-Hammond, 1998; Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996; King & MacPhail-Wilcox, 1994); however, little research is conducted on secondary special educators, despite the potential role they play in educating and influencing the outcomes of special education students. To improve the outcomes of students, we need to increase secondary special education teachers' preservice and inservice preparation, as well as their satisfaction for these components in the profession.

Appendix A

1/6/03

Dear Administrator:

Hello. We are doctoral students at Michigan State University. We are conducting separate surveys on secondary special education in Michigan. We are asking for your help in distributing our surveys to two specific special education teachers. We are sending both surveys to you in an attempt not to overburden any one of your teachers with two surveys. These surveys can provide very important information about the daily lives of secondary special education teachers and the curricula that they use for their students.

We are writing to you because we randomly selected your school to participate in these surveys. We want to assure you that the privacy of you, your teacher(s), and your school district will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Neither the names nor any identifying information will be used during conference presentation or in any published work. If you have any questions about this study, please contact our supervisor.

We would truly appreciate your assistance in securing knowledgeable teachers at your school to respond to these surveys. Ideally, the survey entitled **Investigating Secondary Special Education with Students with Mild Mental Impairment and Learning Disabilities** (and marked **ISSE**) would go to a teacher who:

- is fully certified in special education

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- who has taught 3 or more years for your district, and
- who has experience teaching students with mild mental impairment.

The survey marked **LD** should go to a teacher with similar qualifications who has experience teaching students with learning disabilities.

As we realize we are currently in a national shortage of teachers, if your district does not have a teacher that meets this description, please choose a teacher who:

- First, meets the experience with the particular special education categories requirement
- Then, one who is fully certified in special education
- Finally, the special education teacher who is available at your school.

If you could please pass this survey along to two teachers as described above, it would be greatly appreciated. Each survey takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and each can be returned in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelopes. The input of your teachers is very valuable to us and to the completion of these projects. If you or your teacher are interested in the results of the survey, please indicate so and we will mail one to you once the results have been compiled. Thank you.

Appendix B

Investigating Secondary Special Education for Students with Mild Mental Impairment and Learning Disabilities

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are very important and we value your input. The purpose of this survey is to determine what currently occurs in secondary

special education classrooms in Michigan, looking specifically at the populations of students with learning disabilities and mild mental impairment.

Below is terminology that may be used throughout the survey. You are encouraged to use this as a reference if you are unsure of the usage of a term. Thank you.

Please note that the following acronyms will be used throughout the survey for convenience:

EMI for students with mild mental impairment/retardation (IQ generally between 55 and 70)

LD for students with learning disabilities (of any kind—reading, written expression, math, etc)

TMI for students with moderate mental impairment/retardation (IQ generally between 40 and 55)

EI for students with emotional impairments (not counting those with ADHD or ADD)

SMI for students with severe/profound mental impairment/retardation (IQ generally less than 40)

SXI for students with severe multiple impairments

SLI for students with speech and language impairments

PI for students with physical impairments

OI for students with other health impairments

VI for students with visual impairments

HI for students with hearing impairments

AI for students with Autism

TBI for students with traumatic brain injury

Resource room = education programs where students spend less than 50% of their time in special education.

Self-contained = education programs where students spend 50% or more of their time in special education.

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Appendix C

Investigating Secondary Special Education for Students with Mild Mental Impairment and Learning Disabilities

Demographics

1. What is the name of your school district? _____
2. What size is your school district classified as by the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA), specified by enrollment of students? (Please check one):
 A (1008 students and above) B (1007–488)
 C (487–243) D (242 and below)
3. Please indicate the geographical classification your school is considered (check one):
 Urban Rural Suburban Small town Mid-size city
4. Please indicate your gender: Male Female
5. Please indicate the highest degree you hold: BA/BS MA/MS
 Ed Specialist PhD
 Other (please specify) _____
6. Please describe your teaching experience, by answering the following questions:
 - i. The total number of years you have been teaching: _____
 - ii. The number of years you taught general education: _____
 - iii. The number of years you taught special education: _____
 - iv. The number of years you taught secondary special education: _____
 - v. The number of years you taught in your current district: _____
 - vi. The number of years you taught in your current position: _____
7. Do you have a teaching certificate? Please indicate yes (Y) or no (N): _____
8. If you have a teaching certificate, are you certified or endorsed in special education? Please indicate yes (Y) or no (N): _____
9. If yes, you are fully endorsed, please indicate what you are endorsed in (please indicate the order by which you earned your endorsements, by marking the first one 1, the second 2, etc.):
 Emotional Impairment Speech-Language Impairment
 Specific Learning Disabilities Mental Impairment
 Hearing Impairment Visually Impairment
 Physically or Otherwise Health Impaired Autism
10. If no, you are not fully endorsed, are you Emergency or Temporarily Certified (Y or N): _____
11. This year for each hour/class period, please indicate as best you can the **number** of students you service in each category: (Please use a student's primary classification, if he/she has more than one)

	EMI	LD	Other (SLI, EI, AI, TMI, SMI, SXI, OI, PI, HI, VI, TBI)
1 st	_____	_____	_____
2 nd	_____	_____	_____
3 rd	_____	_____	_____
4 th	_____	_____	_____
5 th	_____	_____	_____
6 th	_____	_____	_____
7 th	_____	_____	_____
12. Please indicate what you typically do during the course of your school day for each hour. Under the Subject column, please write what subject you are teaching each hour or indicate planning time if applicable. Under the Setting/Role column, please indicate either A, B, C, or D. Under the Activities column, please indicate either 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 for which best describes what you spend the majority (>50%) of your time doing during each hour. For block scheduling, please use one slot per block and write both subjects, in applicable, under the Subject column.

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Class Hour/ Block	Subject (please write in which subject you teach each hour, if applicable. Example—Reading, Math, History, etc. If it is planning time, please indicate that.)	Setting/Role (choose 1)		Activities (choose 1)						
		<u>A</u> = Deliver alternative curric- ulum to students in pull- out setting	<u>B</u> = Teaching content subject to all special education students in pull-out set- ting	<u>C</u> = Give special education students special help in content areas or study skills in pull-out setting	<u>CT</u> = Co-teach with general education teacher	<u>O</u> = Other (please indicate)	1. Direct Instruction to whole class or small group (teach skills or content area)	2. Adaptation/Accomodations or Re-teaching (of materi- als, tasks, tests, texts, or other assignments)	3. Consultation with teachers, other professionals, and parents	4. Complete paperwork
1 st	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2 nd	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3 rd	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4 th	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5 th	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6 th	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7 th	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Curriculum and Instructional Environments

13. Please indicate, to the best of your knowledge (estimate), the following information:
- The total number of special education students in your school: ____
 - The total number of EMI students in your school: ____
 - The total number of LD students in your school: ____
14. Please indicate the following information, **as it pertains to your caseload**:
- The total number of special education students: ____
 - The number of EMI students: ____
 - The number of LD students: ____

***For the following questions, please base your responses on what occurs at your school building, not for just your caseload. Please respond to the best of your knowledge.**

15. Please rank order the top THREE instructional environments used with **EMI** students at your school? (1 being the most common, 2 being the second most common, and 3 being the third most common)
- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| ___ Resource Room | ___ General Education Classroom (Inclusion) |
| ___ Self-Contained Classroom | ___ General Education Classroom in co-taught classroom |
| ___ Community Worksite | ___ In-school Worksite |
| ___ Community-based instruction | ___ Alternative school |
| ___ Vocational/Tech Prep Program | |
16. Please rank order the top THREE instructional environments used with **LD** students at your school? (1 being the most common, 2 being the second most common, and 3 being the third most common)
- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| ___ Resource Room | ___ General Education Classroom (Inclusion) |
| ___ Self-Contained Classroom | ___ General Education Classroom in co-taught classroom |
| ___ Community Worksite | ___ In-school Worksite |
| ___ Community-based instruction | ___ Alternative school |
| ___ Vocational/Tech Prep Program | |

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17. If you were to categorize the curriculum that typifies the experience for **EMI** students at your school, what does it include (**Please check all that apply**):
- General education curriculum made applicable to the needs and IEP goals of students
 - Specific special education curriculum with unique set of materials (purchased)
 - A lower grade level general education curriculum with appropriate materials
 - A unique curriculum teachers devise based on the individual needs of their students
 - A functional or life management curriculum that focuses on skills most applicable to the adult world
 - Vocational education curriculum (worksites, etc.)
 - There is no established curriculum
 - Other (please specify): _____
18. Please mark an X in the **ONE** utilized the most for **EMI** students at your school.
- General education curriculum made applicable to the needs and IEP goals of students
 - Specific special education curriculum with unique set of materials (purchased)
 - A lower grade level general education curriculum with appropriate materials
 - A unique curriculum teachers devise based on the individual needs of their students
 - A functional or life management curriculum that focuses on skills most applicable to the adult world
 - Vocational education curriculum (worksites, etc.)
 - There is no established curriculum
 - Other (please specify): _____
19. Please indicate the content area(s) the majority of **EMI** students at your school receive instruction in Special Education settings, such as resource room, self-contained, etc. (**Please check all that apply**).
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Language arts (reading, writing) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Electives (please indicate) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please indicate) _____ | |
20. If you were to categorize the curriculum that typifies the experience for **LD** students at your school, what does it include (**Please check all that apply**):
- General education curriculum made applicable to the needs and IEP goals of students
 - Specific special education curriculum with unique set of materials (purchased)
 - A lower grade level general education curriculum with appropriate materials
 - A unique curriculum teachers devise based on the individual needs of their students
 - A functional or life management curriculum that focuses on skills most applicable to the adult world
 - Vocational education curriculum (worksites, etc.)
 - There is no established curriculum
 - Other (please specify): _____
21. Please mark an X in the **ONE** utilized the most for **LD** students at your school.
- General education curriculum made applicable to the needs and IEP goals of students
 - Specific special education curriculum with unique set of materials (purchased)
 - A lower grade level general education curriculum with appropriate materials
 - A unique curriculum teachers devise based on the individual needs of their students
 - A functional or life management curriculum that focuses on skills most applicable to the adult world
 - Vocational education curriculum (worksites, etc.)
 - There is no established curriculum
 - Other (please specify): _____
22. Please indicate the content area(s) the majority of **LD** students at your school receive instruction in Special Education settings, such as resource room, self-contained, etc. (**Please check all that apply**).
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Language arts (reading, writing) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Electives (please indicate) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please indicate) _____ | |

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23. How much choice do you feel you have in terms of the curricular approaches that are provided for special education faculty in your district (on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being no and 5 being complete):
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Choice in Curricular Approach/Curriculum | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

Perceived Effectiveness and Provider Satisfaction

24. Please indicate your satisfaction with the following programs at your school (on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the most satisfied and 1 being the least satisfied):

Special Education programs in general	1	2	3	4	5
Programs for EMI students	1	2	3	4	5
Programs for LD students	1	2	3	4	5

25. Please rate your perception of the effectiveness of the following components of programs for EMI students at your school (on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the most satisfied and 1 being the least):

Transition	1	2	3	4	5
Social/Emotional Development	1	2	3	4	5
Functional Academics	1	2	3	4	5
Content Instruction	1	2	3	4	5
Life Skills	1	2	3	4	5

26. Please rate your perception of the effectiveness of the following components of programs for **LD** students at your school (on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the most satisfied and 1 being the least):

Transition	1	2	3	4	5
Social/Emotional Development	1	2	3	4	5
Functional Academics	1	2	3	4	5
Content Instruction	1	2	3	4	5
Life Skills	1	2	3	4	5

27. Please rank the below options regarding the **THREE** most important areas for improving your classroom instruction (1 as the most important, 2 as the second, and 3 as the third most important).

- More appropriate curricula
- More preparation time
- Teach classes to one disability label (LD, EI, EMI)
- In-service training in classroom management
- In-service training in instruction methods
- In-service training in transition instruction
- Improved collaboration with colleagues
- Other (please specify) _____

28. Please indicate the area(s) in which postsecondary data are collected for students with disabilities from your district (**Please check all that apply**)

- Employment of students with disabilities
- Residential status of student with disabilities (ex. independent living)
- Educational status of students with disabilities (2-year school, vocational school, etc)
- None—no postsecondary data are collected
- Do not know the answer to this question
- Other (please specify) _____

Teacher Preparation/Professional Development

29. Please rate the effectiveness of your undergraduate preparation to teach secondary special education (on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being very prepared and 1 being not prepared at all).

Undergraduate Preparation	1	2	3	4	5	NA
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30. During your undergraduate or graduate education program(s), please indicate if you had any courses that prepared you to service students in the following categories (**Please check all that apply**):

- EMI LD EI TMI

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31. During your undergraduate or graduate education program(s), please indicate if you had any practicum experience that prepared you to service the following categories (**Please check all that apply**):
- EMI LD EI TMI
32. With respect to your responses to questions 31 and 32, please indicate the levels of education that were addressed in these classes or practicum experiences (**Please check all that apply**):
- Classes: Pre-K-5 6-8 9-12
Practicum: Pre-K-5 6-8 9-12
33. Have you had any professional development in special education within the last two years? (Y/N):
34. Please indicate what topics you have had professional development on (**Please check all that apply**):
- Positive Behavior Support Career Preparation
 Law and Litigation Content Areas (math, history, etc.)
 Specific Disabilities (LD, EMI, EI) Transition
 Other (please specify) _____
35. Please indicate your perception of the usefulness of these professional development topics, if you have had experience with them (1-5 with 5 being very effective and 1 being useless):
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Positive behavior support | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Law and Litigation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Career Preparation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Specific Disabilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Content Areas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Transition | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
36. How much choice do you feel you have in terms of the professional development activities that are provided for special education faculty in your district (on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being no and 5 being complete):
- | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Choice in Professional Development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Your responses will be used to discuss the current state of secondary special education in Michigan for students with learning disabilities and mild mental impairment.

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Emily C. Bouck, College of Education, Michigan State University.