

**The Investigation of Interns', Teachers', and Principals' Perceptions of
Preparedness in Elementary Education**

by

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Abstract

Forty to 50 percent of teachers are leaving the teaching profession in their first five years due to a lack of confidence and a feeling of incompetence when trying to meet the needs of their students in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2007; Kersaint, 2005; Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). While teacher attrition is going up, student achievement is coming down (Duncan, 2010). This study investigated the perceptions of elementary interns, cooperating teachers, and principals on the preparedness of the elementary interns when they entered their internships. In this study, the researcher was looking for ways to tweak teacher preparation programs, so that interns, and later classroom teachers, would be more confident and competent in helping their students achieve in the classroom. The data from this investigation revealed that there was a need among the elementary interns to have more knowledge and skills in several areas including Special Education, English Language Learners, Classroom Management, Writing, Differentiation, and Field Experiences.

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“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)

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Chapter I: Introduction

Research reveals that 30 to 50 percent of new teachers leave the field during the first five years due to a lack of confidence and the lack of skills to meet the needs of their students (Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 2010; Cibulka, 2012; Johnson, 2004; Hunt & Carroll, 2003). Even though teacher preparation programs across the nation are constantly improving their curriculum, student achievement is on the downslide (Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 2010; Cibulka, 2012; Duncan, 2010).

With these known facts, how can higher education enhance the curriculum and instruction for teacher candidates, so they are more confident and competent in meeting the needs of their students? How can teacher preparation programs help teacher candidates to be more successful in the classroom and help raise student achievement? Helping teacher candidates to be more competent in the classroom should improve student achievement and help teacher retention (Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 2010; Cibulka, 2012; Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002).

Periodically teacher preparation programs should reflect on their curriculums to discover if they need to tweak or adjust certain components, so they can better prepare teacher candidates for meeting the challenges of students in today's evolving classrooms. Like teachers in the classroom, teacher education programs not only have to think about what they need to teach to teacher candidates, but they also need to think about how they are going to teach their candidates, so they can fully understand what they need to know to help their own students

achieve. This involves many challenges for teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the level of preparedness of the elementary interns as they enter their internships and to discover how well teacher preparation programs are meeting the needs of their interns. This study consisted of 14 interviews, which were held in elementary schools, and included interviews with: three alternative interns, three traditional interns, four cooperating teachers, and four principals.

Statement of the Problem

A large percentage of teachers leave the teaching profession during the first five years, due to the fact that they do not feel confident or competent in meeting the needs of their students. Even though the teacher candidates have graduated from quality teacher preparation programs, it is difficult to keep up with the ever-changing needs of the students in today's classrooms. Teacher attrition is increasing and student achievement is decreasing (Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 2010; Cibulka, 2012; Duncan, 2010). To help with teacher retention and student achievement, teacher preparation programs need to differentiate their curriculums to meet the needs of the teacher candidates, so that they may be better prepared in meeting the needs of their students. Higher education faculties need to be aware of the interns' strengths and their areas where development is needed, so they know how to better prepare the teacher candidates for success (Ingersoll, 2001).

Successful teachers in the field cite that classroom-based experiences and student teaching have been the most significant part of their teacher preparation (Latham & Vogt, 2007). Internship is a time where teacher candidates participate in student teaching and have an

opportunity to put into practice what they have learned. It is also an opportunity for interns to discover their own competencies and weaknesses in teaching.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to address the gap of knowledge in research in regard to teacher preparation. This study will show the level of preparedness of interns in the elementary classroom along with the strengths and weaknesses of interns when trying to meet the needs of their students. The data from this study will help teacher preparation programs make adjustments to their curriculums, so their interns will be more confident and competent when meeting needs of their students during internship.

Research Questions

The following research questions informed this study:

- 1) How do elementary interns, teachers, and principals describe the level of preparedness of interns in the elementary classroom?
- 2) How do elementary interns, teachers, and principals describe the strengths and weaknesses of the elementary interns during their internship?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to reveal the level of preparedness of interns in the elementary classroom and to discover the strengths and weaknesses of elementary interns during their internship. The data from this study will help teacher education programs tweak their curriculums, so that interns will be more successful in meeting their students' needs. By making these curriculum adjustments, interns should be more confident and competent in the classroom helping their students achieve.

Assumptions of the Study

The assumption of the researcher was that this study would indicate that the interns have little confidence in teaching students with special needs, and they would benefit from having professional development in this area. With the increase of inclusion classrooms, more elementary education teachers are serving students with multiple disabilities, but there has been very little instruction on classroom teaching strategies for students with special needs during teacher preparation programs in elementary education.

Another assumption of the researcher was that the study would find that the interns are not confident with classroom management and classroom behavior strategies (Duncan, 2010). From experiences of supervising interns and mentoring first-year teachers, the researcher has found that novices in the teaching profession often ask for help in classroom management and classroom behavior.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study were limited to the participants' willingness to share and be truthful. A major concern in this study was if the participants in the study were a representation of their peers and colleagues, since they were selected according to their availability to participate in the study. Another concern was that the interns would only be able to discuss the needs they could remember at the time of the interview and would not be able to mention the needs that they did not know they had.

Definition of Terms

1. Alternative Intern – An alternative intern is an intern in an alternative teacher preparation program.

2. Alternative Teacher Preparation - The alternative teacher preparation program is for teacher candidates who have an undergraduate degree in another academic area and are earning an education degree through a master's program.

3. BRP –Blue Ribbon Panel Report

4. Clinically Based - The clinically based teacher preparation program has all of its course work based at the elementary school.

5. Cluster Teacher – A cluster teacher is one of several cooperating teachers at one school who share in the responsibility of evaluating each other's interns.

6. Cohort - A cohort is a group of students taking the same courses together at the same time.

7. Cooperating Teacher – A cooperating teacher is the mentor teacher or host teacher for an intern.

8. ELL – English Language Learner

9. Inclusion - An inclusion class includes students with special needs working together with regular education students in the same classroom.

10. Intern – An intern is a teacher candidate in full-time student teaching.

11. Internship – An internship is full-time student teaching.

12. NCATE – National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

13. PDS – Professional Development Schools

14. Practicum – A practicum is time spent in classroom labs as a requirement for a teacher preparation course.

15. Preservice Teacher – A preservice teacher is a student in the College of Education; a teacher candidate.

16. Teacher Candidate – A teacher candidate is a student in the College of Education; a preservice teacher.

17. Teacher Preparation – Teacher preparation is the university course work needed for a degree in education.

18. Traditional Intern – A traditional intern is an intern in a traditional teacher preparation program.

19. Traditional Teacher Preparation - The traditional teacher preparation program is university based. This is when the teacher candidates attend education classes at the university along with lab hours, where they spend time in local elementary school classrooms.

20. NWP – National Writing Project

Chapter II: Literature Review

In today's complex society, students need to be prepared for more difficult learning situations than in previous years. Teachers need to teach for understanding and diversity. They need to teach in ways that a wide range of learners can be successful at high level intellectual tasks (Darling-Hammond, 1996). President Johnson, in 1965, foresaw the future need when he said, "Tomorrow's teachers must not merely be plentiful enough, they must be good enough. They must possess the old virtues of energy and dedication, but they must also possess new knowledge and new skill."

In this information age, schools of education provide high-quality teacher preparation programs, and they are continuously improving their curriculum in order to give teacher candidates the opportunity to reach their diverse students in today's classrooms. However, there are still many of the nation's 1,450 teacher preparation programs that are just doing a mediocre job of teacher preparation for the 21st century classrooms. University-based teacher preparation programs need "revolutionary change and not just evolutionary tinkering" (Duncan, 2010).

According to Arne Duncan, former U. S. Secretary of Education, America is facing three great educational challenges. First is the challenge that the education, millions of Americans received decades ago will not help our students today succeed in our information age, or obtain a job upon high school graduation. President Obama has said, "Education is no longer a pathway to opportunity and success—it's a prerequisite to success." The second challenge is that 30 percent of the students in the United States fail to complete high school. Two centuries ago, Horace Mann, an education reformer, said that education is the great equalizer in America. No

matter what the demographics are of the child, the public school is obligated to teach to each child's full potential. The third challenge is that the nation's need for increasing the number of qualified teachers is being compounded by the exodus of the Baby Boomers leaving the teaching field in the present and near future. During the next few years, the nation could lose about one third of its veteran teachers and school administrators due to retirement and attrition. Most of the vacant teaching positions will be filled by first-year teachers. Duncan reported in a speech given at Columbia Teachers College, "By 2014, the U. S. Department of Education projects that one million new teaching positions will be filled by new teachers." (Duncan, 2010).

Teaching has never been more important or difficult, which means the bar is being raised for teacher education programs. The teacher preparation has to prepare teachers to achieve significant academic growth with their students, who now have needs that are even more diverse than in previous years. The need for student achievement is urgent. In today's world it is not good enough to say, "I taught it. The students just did not learn it." Linda Darling-Hammond says that is like saying that the operation was a success, but the patient died. Research shows that the biggest influence of student achievement is the quality of the teacher, and not family background, socioeconomic level, etc. (Duncan, 2010).

It is important to periodically self-reflect and evaluate our teacher preparation programs, so we can examine the relationship of our past teacher candidates, who are now teachers in classrooms dealing with their students' achievement (Gansle, George, & Burns, 2012).

Research has shown that underprepared beginning teachers may be an important contributor to low student achievement (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wykoff, 2009).

President Obama has set a goal for America, to once again, by 2020, have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. To do this, teacher preparation and public school

systems need to improve drastically. Arthur Levine, former president of Teachers College, has researched and found exemplary programs in teacher education, and at the same time found many programs afflicted with the same problems for decades, and they are still unruly and disordered. He said we should study and copy the practices of effective teacher education programs, and learn from each other what works best in teacher preparation (Duncan, 2010).

In the education field, the attrition rate for teachers was very high in the 1960s, and hit a historically low percentage the 1990s (Grissmer, Kirby, & Nataraj, 1997). Even with a low attrition rate there was concern among the education community that teachers, just starting their careers, were leaving the profession at a noticeably higher rate than those starting careers in other professions (Certo & Fox, 2002). The greatest loss of teachers in the profession happens during the first 10 years (Karge, 1993; Marlow & Inman, 1997). During those first 10 years, 30 percent of teachers leaving do so during the first three years (Johnson, 2004). After five years between 40 and 50 percent of all teachers leave the profession (Ingersoll, 2007; Kersaint, 2005).

Besides personal issues, reasons for leaving the profession included problems with discipline, classroom management, and lack of administrative support (Harrell, Leavell, Tassll, & McGee, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, 2004). The experts are saying that teacher preparation could have an impact on those aforementioned classroom issues (Eberhard & Reinhardt, 2000; Gonzalez, 1995; Holmes, Impink-Hernandez, & Terrel, 1988; Ingersoll, 2001; Marlow, Inman & Betancourt-Smith, 1996).

Teacher preparation experiences provide opportunities for teacher candidates to build a foundation of teacher efficacy by giving them a chance to build confidence through preparedness (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Studies have shown teachers with higher

retention having positive feelings about their teacher preparation which did include clinical practiced opportunities (Chapman & Green; 1986; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002).

History

Before teacher preparation programs emerged in the United States, anyone who had an education, at any level, could teach. There was no training in teaching strategies or pedagogy, just in basic content area. As long as you knew something about the subject matter, you could teach it. Before the twentieth century, education and training in most professional fields were done through apprenticeships. If a person wanted to be indoctrinated into a profession they would shadow or be an apprentice to an experienced professional (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). In the case of teaching, there were no apprenticeships or teaching classes. Instead, anyone who took a class was qualified to teach that class (Larabee, 2008).

In the early nineteenth century, education in America had many venues. Schooling took place in the home where the basics were taught, in churches where learning was done through sermons and study groups, during apprenticeships which required shadowing a master craftsman, in dame schools which were held in neighbors' homes, in private schools which required tuition, and in free schools for paupers which were operated by the local town or governments. The teacher in any of these situations could be a parent, an adult in the neighborhood, a member of the clergy, a corporate employee, a town official, or even a college professor (Larabee, 2008).

The Common School. In the 1830s, the common school was established, which is the base for our public schools today. It was administrated by public officials and the teachers were public employees. The main requirement for a teacher in the common school was to have the ability to maintain order in the classroom. The teacher also had to have completed the level of

education that was being taught, which goes back to the concept of take the class and then teach that class (Larabee, 2008).

Along with being responsible for starting public schools, the common school was also responsible for the first efforts in starting a teacher preparation program. Henry Barnard, James Carter, and Horace Mann were leaders in the common school movement and strong advocates for teacher education. Preparing teachers for the classroom started with a form of summer institutes, which were basically professional development opportunities for teachers in teaching strategies and content knowledge. The sessions lasted for a week or two, and were arranged by the local school system or a group of neighboring school districts (Mattingly, 1975). Teacher education in the United States was born.

The Normal School. With the adoption of the common school, the education in communities was now a single standard model, in a public school setting. No longer were there multiple schooling venues throughout a community. The common school movement rapidly spread throughout the country, with an increase in the number of public schools, resulting in a drastically increased number of teachers needed to teach in the classrooms that were popping up everywhere. The normal school emerged and was the means for providing these needed teachers, as well as preparing them to teach in the classrooms. The term “normal school” originated from the expectation of preparing quality teachers and setting the standards or “norm” for good teaching.

Most local districts established their own normal schools, which were part of the high school level of the education system. At the state level were the most prestigious normal schools, with the first one being in Lexington, Massachusetts, in 1839 (Larabee, 2008). It originated as a high school with the sole purpose of educating professional teachers for the

future. The curriculum included content area and the art of teaching, which is similar to what we have today, except that all of the course work could be concluded in one to two years.

Teacher Colleges. Soon, it was being discovered by students everywhere, that normal schools not only prepared teachers to teach in the classrooms, but they also offered a way to provide an affordable higher education for everyone. Since funding for normal schools came from the government and students' tuition, there was never quite enough and there was always a need to attract more tuition-paying students in order to cover the school budget. Not all students in higher education wanted to be teachers. Many wanted the opportunity to participate in course work that offered a pathway to a variety of jobs in different professions. Normal schools already had professors teaching content in several areas, so it was obvious that these schools of education could easily be turned in to a liberal arts college. The market spoke, and the normal schools accepted students who were not interested in the teaching profession.

Society's pressure continued. The normal schools were teaching a liberal arts curriculum to all students, but they were still ranked as a high school level of education. Students, faculty, administration, and the community all wanted college status for the normal schools. Society prevailed and by the beginning of the twentieth century, state legislatures were transforming normal schools into teacher colleges. Normal schools were now able to grant bachelor degrees, which gave more credibility to their graduating students.

Since teacher colleges had already diversified their curriculum, which actually helped to transform them into liberal arts colleges, more and more students not seeking a degree in education, were being admitted. This resulted in teacher education playing a smaller role across the college every year. So in the 1920s it was logical, to start the trend of changing the names from teacher college to state college.

Regional State Universities. During the 1950s to the 1970s, the former normal schools were now turning into universities. A majority of normal schools had already transformed into teacher colleges, which later became state colleges, and then matured into state universities. In the 1950s, the last normal school disappeared.

Since the beginning of the common school and the normal school, teacher education programs have been caught in the never-ending struggle of quality versus quantity. Society's demand and need to have a teacher in every classroom was so pressing that there was never adequate time to prepare quality teachers. David Larabee (2008) summed it up by saying, "To preserve academic vigor would have meant opting for professional purism over social need." (p. 293).

A few prestigious institutions did have colleges of education, but in order to fill the demand in the schools, regional state universities, which are the heir to normal schools and reside at the bottom of the totem pole for prestige among higher education institutions, had opted to produce large numbers of teacher candidates in order to keep up with the demand of society. They had chosen quantity over quality. This action cost them the respect of their contemporaries, in the other fields of academia at the university level, who believe in the importance of rigor in the academic curriculum in higher education. Since the quality was lacking in the curriculum, many universities perceived teacher education as the "step child". Even though at times, it was also considered to be the "cash cow" of the university, due to the quantity of tuition-paying students graduating in teacher education.

Politics and Education

Politics have had a great influence on teacher preparation programs in the past and in the present. Many programs have been put into law in an attempt to correct flaws in teacher education.

No Child Left Behind. President George W. Bush signed the law, No Child Left Behind of 2001, (NCLB), on January 8, 2002. This started the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), which required several tasks of the schools in the United States, including the task of reporting each school's success, only through the use of standardized test scores. Every student in every school would be tested in order to document their progress in meeting the standards in every grade level set by the state. Every student, school, school district, and state were expected to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward meeting the state standards. There would be consequences if this did not happen (Hyun, 2003).

Rod Paige, U. S. Secretary of Education, released his report, *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers' Challenge*, in June 2002. This aligned itself directly to NCLBA, and stated that teacher preparation programs were not producing the quality of teachers needed in the United States to meet the demands of NCLBA. The secretary's report defined highly qualified teachers as those teachers who demonstrate content knowledge and verbal ability. The NCLBA and the secretary's report were implying that the states' higher and tougher standards would ensure that no child is left behind (Hyun, 2003).

Teacher educators were troubled by the term "qualified teacher", which originally came from Public Law 107-110, NCLBA section 2131. This law gives the U. S. Secretary of Education the authority to initiate a National Teacher Recruitment Campaign to help high-need local education districts to find teachers in high-poverty schools. A highly qualified teacher is

described as a person who has obtained full state certification through various alternate routes or who has passed that state teacher licensing exam and holds a license to teach in that state (Hyun, 2003). Marilyn Cochran-Smith warned of the danger of the new definition of highly qualified and it could instantly transform unqualified teachers into qualified teachers. She stated:

For example: a teacher who is “unqualified” because of no experience in the classroom, no courses in pedagogy, no knowledge of cultural difference, no study of how people learn, no knowledge of human development, and so on, may with the stroke of a pen, that institutionalized the new federal definition, be instantaneously transformed into a “highly qualified teacher”, provided he or she has passed a state teacher test (pg. 381).

The NCLBA, along with the secretary’s report, also suggested that teacher preparation programs reduce the number of methods courses that teacher candidates are required to take along with reducing the number of requirements in the teacher education programs. Many teacher educators were disturbed by these suggestions and stated that teacher licenses requirements do need to be improved in many states, but it should not be at the expense of the quality of the teacher preparation programs (Hyun, 2003).

Race to the Top. Race to the Top is a US. Department of Education funding program that is helping teacher preparation. The government has issued \$4.35 billion, in 28 grants for Teacher Quality Partnership programs that went to colleges of education and high-need school districts. More than half of the grant money went to support teacher preparation residency programs. Teacher residency programs try to follow a medical model of training for teachers. Residents are placed in schools for a yearlong apprenticeship, during their teacher preparation, with extensive induction and support (Duncan, 2010).

Race to the Top also offers grant money for states to conduct longitudinal data systems to

track the impact of new teachers on student learning over a period of years. This will help to collect data to see which of the schools of education are effective and which ones are not. Presently Louisiana is the only state tracking the effectiveness of its teacher preparation programs through this method support (Duncan, 2010).

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1975). IDEA and its amendments state that students with disabilities are to be provided a free appropriate education in the least restricted environment (IDEA 1990, 1997). In 1997 and 2004, along with the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), IDEA and its amendments expanded these accommodations. This paved the way to mainstream students with disabilities into regular education classes. Previously, students with disabilities were placed in separate classrooms and segregated from their classmates without disabilities. Therefore, they were not considered part of the school community, did not receive the general education curriculum, and had few opportunities to associate with students without disabilities. This Act mandated that students with disabilities be placed in regular education classes with regular education curriculum to the maximum extent possible. Inclusion classes arrived on the education scene.

Trends in Education

Trends in Education are educational ideas, concepts, or initiatives that are popular at the present time and have an effect on our educational systems. These trends evolve from good intentions and often strive to improve student achievement, but results are not always what was expected. Educational trends may have an impact on interns in the classroom.

Open Concept. In the 1970s, the open concept schools consisted of large rooms, with enough space for flexible grouping and team teaching. Two to three classes were able to fit into one room where the teachers differentiate by placing all the students in flexible grouping

according to their needs. The concept was to help prepare the students for the future work place that demanded abilities to work cooperatively with peers, make group decisions, and problem solve (Cobos & Lewallen, 2009). The word “open” was often confused with the logistics and physical arrangement of the walls and furniture, where “open” was intended to represent the type of education with no barriers for each student (Rothenberg, 1989). Due to so many students in one area, some educators felt it would be too noisy and distracting, so many did not fully buy into the concept, which was part of the reason for its downfall (Henderson & Maddux, 2001). In open concept schools, students were found to be more independent, creative, confident, and achieved higher than they did in the traditional class setting (Rothenberg, 1989).

Inclusion. An inclusion class includes students with special needs working together with regular education students in the same classroom. General education teachers in these classes need to be equipped with skills to assess and teach not only their regular education students but also their students with special needs (Elliott, McKevitt, & Kettler, 2002; Polloway, Epstein, & Bursuck, 2003). Traditionally, Special Education professors prepared teacher candidates for what they needed to know about students with special needs. These courses taught by professors in Special Education were extremely beneficial (Frattura & Topinka, 2006). However, one course is not sufficient to raise the level of competence and confidence of preservice teachers, when working with students with special needs in the inclusion classrooms (Brown, Welsh, Hill, & Cipko, 2007). It was enough to make them aware of what to expect with students with disabilities, but not enough to educate them on how to handle those issues and situations (Forlon & Chambers, 2010). A Special Education course, along with field experience during classroom labs, may be enough to help preservice teachers feel more competent and confident when working in an inclusion classroom (Swain, Nordness, & Leader-Janssen, 2012). Teacher

candidates needed experience in the field working with students with special needs. Whether it was working one-on-one with a student with special needs or having experience in an inclusion classroom, both situations had a positive effect on preparing teacher candidates for working with students with special needs (Lancaster & Bain, 2010). Research does show that including strategies to use, when teaching students with special needs in the regular course content during teacher preparation, was effective in developing a base for teacher candidates when working with students who have disabilities (Powers, 1992).

National Writing Project. The National Writing Project (NWP) was initiated by colleges of education starting with Berkley, in 1973. It was an antidote to an embarrassing situation on the Berkley campus, that half of the freshman class, from top graduates in the nation, needed writing remediation (Smith, 1996). It was soon obvious that teacher preparation programs were not teaching writing, since many classroom teachers were not able to instruct their students on the mechanics of writing. However, there were some teachers who had students who were successful writers. The National Writing Project was created so all teachers could come together and share their successful teaching practices, and teach one another (Smith, 1996). NWP is a professional development network of educators that enhances the teaching capacity of teachers by sharing ideas of how to help students achieve. The teachers come together during the summer at colleges of education to learn how to teach writing, while networking with their peers and sharing practices of student achievement in all areas of the academics. It has been proven that teachers learn best from other teachers (Tedrow, 2015).

The advocates of the National Writing Project believe that writing is a learning tool. Cathy Buckholt, a master teacher and participant in the National Writing Project, said:

The best way for students to learn is through writing. The best way for students to show they know something is to put it into writing. The best way to learn to read is to read your own writing. The best way to teach punctuation is to have students write and punctuate their own writing (personal communication, 9/29/2016).

Studies show that NWP has helped improve student writing across the country, but unfortunately Congress cut direct funding for the project in 2011 (Heitin, 2016).

Whole Language. Whole language was a reading initiative started in California, in 1987, which stressed that students should focus on the meaning of words when learning to read instead of trying to decode the phonetic sounds of the word. Students' reading and writing scores plummeted in California in 1987-1992 (Krashen, 2002). This catapulted California lawmakers to pass a bill providing \$46 million for textbooks and materials, along with professional development to train teachers in phonic-based reading instruction. Some feel that the legislatures, with no educational background, were trying to dictate how teachers teach (Manzo, 1997).

Teacher Educational Programs. It has been noted that society, today, does not understand or respect teacher education, and feels that it takes very little formal study. Anyone can teach, they only need a little knowledge and the rest they can learn along the way, as some of the thinking goes. Deans have complained that their schools of education receive no respect from the oval office to the provost, and from the universities' presidents to Secretaries of Education. A century ago it was believed, by many, that teachers were born and not made. In 1899, William James thought of teaching as an art and many of his peers thought of teaching as a craft instead of a profession (Duncan, 2010). Society does not understand what it takes to be a teacher. The magnitude of skills it takes for a teacher to be successful in the classroom is

invisible to society. Linda Darling-Hammond (2006) compared it to a conductor at a musical performance. The audience sees only a person waving his or her arms in front of the musicians in the orchestra, and they do not see all of the skills that are required of that person while he or she is up front directing.

We have learned how to build strong and effective teacher education programs and must resist the pressures of society to dilute rigorous teacher preparation curriculums (Darling-Hammond, 2006a). We have done this to ourselves by meeting society's demands in the past with our normal schools and going for quantity over quality. It is going to be hard to change the reputation and perception that has been there for centuries.

It is unfortunate that teacher candidates, who are attracted to getting their teacher credentials with access to the least amount of knowledge, graduate being less prepared than others, who partake in a more rigorous teacher education curriculum. It is these lower-ability teacher candidates who usually end up teaching the high-need students in the low-income urban and rural schools, where the higher-ability teachers and their skills are needed (Darling-Hammond, 2006a). Education is the civil rights issue of today's generation. Children in needy schools today have a good chance of having the least qualified teachers (Duncan, 2010). Today we are graduating some of our best prepared teachers, but unfortunately the number of teachers is increasing who serve the neediest students and enter the classroom poorly prepared to teach (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

Teacher education programs must help teacher candidates to understand a broad spectrum of teaching, learning, social, and cultural elements and then be able to apply these understandings in a complex classroom with diverse students. If future teachers are to succeed at this challenge, teacher education programs need to provide settings in which teacher candidates

can learn to teach and later become successful teachers. Teacher education also needs to inform the policy makers and the community what it takes to teach effectively in today's world (Fullan, 1993).

Types of Teacher Preparation Programs

University Based Teacher Preparation Programs. After normal schools were abandoned, many traditional teacher preparation programs separated theory and application in their curriculum. Teachers were taught how to teach from textbooks and in lecture halls. Many teacher candidates completed their coursework before starting their internship and were not given the opportunity to make the connection between theory and practice. Cooperating teachers were not selected due to their teaching ability, and what teacher candidates faced in their internship classrooms did not match what they were taught at the university. When first-year teachers entered the classroom, they had no connections between theory and practice and they remembered very little from what they had learned in their textbooks and lectures. All of this resulted in them reverting back to what they knew best, and that was to teach the way they were taught (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Clinically Based Teacher Preparation Programs. Teacher candidates, who have had more experience in the classroom, might possibly be more competent and confident when facing issues in their own classrooms. Clinically based teacher preparation programs focus on classroom experiences from the beginning and throughout the teacher preparation programs, instead of just the traditional finale internship at the end of the program. Teacher education programs that shrink the gap between theory and practice, and immerse teacher candidates in the elementary school classrooms, have the potential of better preparing beginning teachers for the challenges they will face, someday, in their own classroom (Latham & Vogt, 2007).

Professional development schools (PDS) is a model for clinical experiences in teacher education that immerses teacher candidates in the real world of teaching. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education defines PDS as a program with more time and immersion into the school environment. Studies have found that PDS programs had a positive effect on how long teachers stayed in the profession and that teacher candidates, with a high academic achievement, were remaining in the profession longer (Latham & Vogt, 2007).

Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs. Alternative teacher preparation programs have resulted from teacher shortages and the predictions of the continuation of teachers' shortages in the foreseen future. It is a desperate measure to train teachers quickly so that people with a teaching certificate can fill the empty slots on a school faculty's roster (Clewell, 2000). Alternative teacher preparation programs attract non-traditional students and professionals who are career changing and are driven to complete the certification process quickly (Birrell, Alfred, & Butler, 1999). The push to move teacher candidates quickly through the certification process has always been problematic for traditional university and college teacher preparation programs. They have always wanted to develop high quality teacher preparation programs that would produce effective teachers, but they have not been able to keep up with the number of teachers that society's needs demand.

Alternative teaching preparation is also aimed at recruiting teachers for urban schools in poverty areas where the number of students is constantly increasing and the need for teachers is great. Unfortunately, this is where the more effective teachers are needed in order to meet the wildly diverse needs of the students of these poverty communities (Hart, 2002).

President George H. W. Bush, 1988, encouraged alternative teacher certification in order to allow more flexibility in teacher recruitment. Newt Gingrich's major education initiative, in

1995, suggests the elimination of teacher certification which requires teacher preparation. Forty states have alternative programs for teacher preparation instead of the traditional four-year undergraduate program (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Many have tried to find a solution to the problem.

Teacher Preparation Components

Teachers need to have knowledge of how students learn, an understanding of the curriculum and content, and an understanding of teaching skills and pedagogies. In addition to a deeper knowledge base, teacher education needs to have three main cornerstones that have been difficult to acquire since teacher preparation moved from the normal schools in the 1950s. First is the integration among courses and between coursework and clinical work. Faculties need to plan together and share syllabi across university programs and departments. Faculties who teach classes should also supervise and advise teacher candidates, and even teach children in the placement schools, which bring together separate programs through the integration of roles. Intern supervision is then not left to adjunct personnel who have not been a part of the coursework in the teacher preparation curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2006a). Strong cohesive preparation programs have higher achievement in learning to teach, than teacher preparation programs where the departments are fragmented (Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

The second important feature of teacher education is to have a strong supervised clinical experience in the classroom that is integrated with coursework, which allows teacher candidates to learn from expert teachers in the classroom, who are serving diversified students. Research shows that teacher candidates, who participate in clinicals along with their coursework, are better at understanding theory and concepts, that they learn during their courses to support student learning (Baumgartner, Koener, & Rust, 2002; Denton, 1982; Henry, 1983; Ross, Hughes, &

Hill, 1981; Sunal, 1980). Cognitive science confirms that people learn more effectively, when concepts are reinforced and connected in both practice and theory (Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

The third important element of a teacher preparation program is the partnership between the clinical school and the teacher preparation program. Coursework by itself cannot equal the power of teacher candidates in the classrooms working alongside experienced teachers. In highly developed PDS (Professional Development Schools) models, university faculty and school educators work together on developing curriculum, organizing professional development at the school site, and teaching children in the classrooms. Teacher candidates learn in all parts of the school and not just in the classrooms (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Trachtmann, 1996). Immersing teacher candidates in educational materials and working on concepts using these materials in the classroom is powerful for teacher learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Shulman, 2002; Lambert & Ball, 1998).

Studies are showing that teachers who have graduated from strong PDS teacher preparation programs feel more knowledgeable and prepared to teach than other new teachers, and are rated by their supervisors as being better prepared than other new teachers (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, & Duffey, 2005). Research is showing that PDS is hard to enact but many teacher preparation programs are moving toward this type of setting in their clinicals (Darling-Hammond, 2006a).

Educating Teacher Candidates

When educating teacher candidates, research has shown that there are some challenges and issues that interns may face when working with their students in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2006b). These concerns may be reflected in their level of preparedness, as well as in their strengths and weaknesses.

Challenges. According to Linda Darling Hammond, when reviewing research, there are three challenges that seem to stand out from the rest. One has to do with the fact that teacher candidates need to realize that everyone does not learn the same way, and not everyone learns the way they did in school. Don Lortie (1975) calls it the “apprenticeship of observation” where teacher candidates have spent 12 years of their lives participating in the classroom and observing teachers. Their own classroom experiences are not the only ways to meet the needs of students. The apprenticeship of observation, which is the belief of teacher candidates that they should be taught the way they were taught (Lortie, 1975), is hard to change during the traditional teacher preparation time (Zeichner & Gore, 1990) and almost impossible during the alternative program (Hart, 2002).

Another prominent challenge is what Mary Kennedy (1999) refers to as “the problem of enactment”. Teacher candidates not only need to understand what needs to be done to help students be successful in the classroom, but they also need to take the initiative to do what needs to be done to help their students achieve. Kennedy calls it “not only thinking like a teacher, but also acting like a teacher”.

The third common challenge deals with being flexible and multi-tasking. Teacher candidates need to be in control of many tasks at one time, and these tasks can be constantly changing in order for them to be able to meet the needs of their students (Jackson, 1994).

Issues. When issues arise in the classroom, teacher preparation has been looked to as a resource in discovering ways to cope and deal with these situations. Teacher preparation has the opportunity to help prepared teacher candidates in handling these issues and situations.

Writing. Writing is an important skill that is often neglected in today’s classrooms, due to the fact that many teachers never received training in writing instruction. Teacher preparation

programs need to provide teacher candidates the opportunity to practice detailed assessments of students' writings. By scoring student writings during teacher preparation, the interns will feel more confident in this skill. Most interns, due to their own writings and reading the writing of others, can recognize good and bad writing, but to give a more detailed assessment is a difficult task. Without a framework of what constitutes good writing, it is almost impossible to be able to tell a student how to improve their writing. In order to help their students improve in writing, not only do teacher candidates need to know how to analyze student writing, they also need to have a good grasp on the mechanics of the English Language (Dempsey, PytlikZillig, Bruning, 2009). Research has shown that structured practice with authentic student work has shown improvement in teacher candidates' ability to score student writings (Bandura, 1977). Progress has been shown with just a few guided attempts to analyze student work. When teacher candidates have the confidence to effectively grade student work they will be more apt to focus on writing in their classrooms (Dempsey, Pytlik-Zillig, Bruning, 2009).

Research indicates that 40 percent of college freshman are not equipped with the necessary writing skill needed for college courses (Moore and Carpenter, 1985). In fact, faculties of higher education have been reporting the writing weaknesses of their students as long as higher education has been in existence, as far back as Burke's remarks in 1888 (Gold, 2005). Writing deficiencies are serious problems at many U. S. colleges and universities. Writing is an integral part of literacy, but only a small percentage of high school students are capable of performing writing skills necessary for college or even as employees in the workplace (Perskey, Daane, & Jin, 2003).

The issue seems to rise when a student passes a college composition course. Just because a student has made a satisfactory grade during a language course does not mean he or she has

mastery of those skills. Students may take advantage of tutors in order to make it through an exam, but that does not mean the student has the mastery needed to apply that skill in the future. Students who have weak writing skills have extreme difficulties during their junior and senior college years due to the increased demand of writing in the different areas of academics. A passing grade in an entry-level course does not mean competence in a skill. Teacher candidates need to have the necessary writing skills, in order to teach their students to write (Wilde, Kreamelmeyer, Buckner, 2009).

English Language Learners. The number of English Language Learners in today's classroom is growing at a phenomenal rate. It is very possible, that by the year 2050, every U.S. teacher will have a student in his or her classroom that does not speak English (Samway & McKeon, 1999). With this growth comes the crucial need of teacher preparation programs to include English Language Learners instruction in their curriculums. Teachers are not well prepared to help their culturally diverse students in their classrooms succeed, due to the fact that their teacher preparation programs did not include how to teach this diverse population (Clair, 2000). Even when the topic of English Language Learners is addressed in higher education, the treatment of practical issues was non-existent (Watson, Miller, Driver, Rutledge, and McAllister, 2005).

Special Education. Due to inclusion, we now have students with special needs in regular education classrooms, whose achievement is the responsibility of the regular classroom teacher. The special education teacher is a resource for the student and general education teacher and is only available at certain times during the week. The responsibility of educating this child is with the classroom teacher, who has not been trained in teaching pedagogies and strategies that would benefit students with special needs or with the strategies that may be included on the I.E.P.

(Rieck & Wadsworth, 2005). There are also students in the regular education classroom who exhibit needs for special services but do not qualify for services at this time. Those students are still in the classroom with the same needs, with no help from the Special Education teacher in meeting those needs. If teacher candidates had experience in an inclusion classroom along with an introductory course in Special Education, it might be extremely beneficial in these situations (Swain et al., 2012).

Classroom Management. The first few years of a teacher's career are the most productive in learning about the teaching profession (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004). School faculties play a significant part in the education of beginning teachers and meeting their needs once they arrive at their classrooms. Grade level teachers are usually the ones who provide support since they are near, have the similar responsibilities, and have had the experience with these tasks. The school principal is the one who creates the school culture and who allows and supports peer tutoring and mentoring among grade level teachers (Hopkins & Spillane, 2014).

Recent research indicates that novice teachers report low confidence in their ability to effectively handle classroom behavior (Hertzog, 2002; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Woolfolk-Hoi & Burke-Spero, 2005), and teachers constantly report that the frustration with this issue is a primary reason for leaving the teaching profession (Liu & Meyer, 2005). Research literature suggests that very few teacher preparation programs offer training in classroom management (McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005).

Classroom management is a primary concern of all educators, whether they are seasoned or a novice (Goyette, Dore, & Dion, 2000). Managing a classroom is an ongoing process that is affected by the people in the class and outside forces (Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005).

Even though classroom management is a vital ingredient in effective classroom teaching, there is little available on how teachers gain knowledge about managing their classrooms (Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005). Teachers seem to give credit to their knowledge of classroom management from their personal experiences or experiences of their colleagues. Little credit is given to their teacher preparation programs, due to the fact classroom management was not strong or did not exist in the college curriculum. To compound all of this, teachers also admit to using multiple classroom management strategies, which fluctuate with each class depending on the needs of the students (Garrahy et al., 2005).

For decades, classroom management has been the greatest requested professional development for teachers in the classroom (Rollin, Subotnik, Bassford, & Smulson, 2008). Many educators feel that classroom management is just a “bag of tricks”, instead of research based best practices (Brophy, 1988; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Therefore, many teachers, including beginning teachers, feel unprepared when it comes to classroom management (Jones, 2006; Oliver & Reschly, 2007).

Classroom management is difficult to teach in a university setting, where it is difficult to engage teacher candidates in thoughtful and reflective thinking concerning classroom management issues they have not witnessed. A proven strategy for classroom management is web-based case instruction where teacher candidates witness a classroom issue on-line and then respond to questions on how they would handle the situation. Also included in the activity are different perspectives on the issue from the teacher, parents, and students, along with recent research concerning the situation, and how the teacher handled the situation in the end. These activities were also able to be topics for later discussions during the university class times, and seemed to be beneficial to teacher candidates (Lee & Choi, 2008).

Research does show for classroom management to be successful, the teacher preparation course needs to include quality time in the classroom observing and dealing with classroom management issues (Christofferson & Sullivan 2015). These observations need to be structured with a checklist of strategies to observe support instruction and positive behavior (Shook, 2012). The implementation of classroom community building also needs to be observed. Classroom communities encourage student achievement and results in less behavior problems (Bafumo, 2006). Basically, classroom organization and structure increase student engagement which results in student achievement (Shook, 2012).

Chapter III: Methods

The purpose of this study was to discover the needs of elementary interns as they strive to meet the needs of their students in the elementary classroom. The researcher wanted to know the level of preparedness of interns in the elementary classroom, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the elementary interns during their internships.

The following research questions informed this study:

- 1) How do elementary interns, teachers, and principals describe the level of preparedness of the interns in the elementary classroom?
- 2) How do elementary interns, teachers, and principals describe the strengths and weaknesses of the elementary interns during their internships?

This study, which consists of 14 one-on-one interviews, was a qualitative collective case study due to the researcher not only wanting to identify the needs of the interns, but also wanting to discover the circumstances that caused the needs. The researcher also understood that interns do not always know what they do not know. Therefore, the number of times a need is mentioned is not important, the fact that it was mentioned is. If one intern mentions a need, it does not mean that she or he is the only one that has that need. The rest of the interns may have the same need, but did not think to mention it.

Participants

This study consisted of 14 individual interviews, which included interviews with three traditional elementary interns, three alternative elementary interns, four elementary cooperating teachers of traditional and alternative interns, and four elementary principals of traditional and

alternative interns. All interns interviewed had received top scores and grades in their cohort. All teachers and principals, who were interviewed, were highly ranked in their fields, were considered competent in their positions, and were working in high-quality schools. The researcher felt that the high quality of the interviewees and their positions was important, so that the results would not be considered to be due to poor candidates or inferior educational situations. All interviewees were given pseudo names to protect their anonymity.

Traditional Interns. The teacher candidates interviewed in the traditional teacher preparation program were earning a degree in elementary education, and they were taking classes at a university in content areas, educational philosophy, and instructional pedagogies. Several of the courses had a lab component where they would be required to spend a certain number of hours, and or days, per week, in a public school classroom, observing and interacting with students. Upon graduation, they were certified to teach in grades kindergarten through sixth grade, and were deemed highly qualified by the state department of education.

“Tina”, the first traditional intern interviewed, was interning in a first grade classroom, in a prominent school system. She was an excellent student athlete, who had received many honors and awards. Tina had already accepted a position to teach in a third-world country and start a sports program for children, after she graduated.

“Terry”, the second traditional intern interviewed, had just completed her internship in a first grade classroom in a highly rated school system. Terry was a math major before switching to elementary education. She had many opportunities to work with children before her internship, such as being a nanny, camp counselor, volunteer tutor at an at-risk elementary school, and a math tutor for undergraduates at the university. She also had accumulated volunteer service hours at a local elementary school during high school.

“Tracy”, the third traditional intern interviewed, was interning in the second grade in a highly ranked school system. Her previous experience with children, besides her education labs, was teaching summer school and working summers at a daycare.

Alternative Interns. The teacher candidates in the alternative teacher preparation programs had already graduated from college. They did not have an undergraduate degree in elementary education, so they were seeking an elementary education certification through a master’s degree program. In many incidences, these graduate students had already used their undergraduate degrees in the business world, and for one reason or another had decided to change their career paths and become a part of the education profession. Their classwork consisted of courses in content areas, educational philosophy, and instructional pedagogies. Several of the courses had a lab component where they were required to spend a certain number of hours a week, observing and interacting with students in a public school classroom, special education setting, and a daycare facility. They participated in a split internship, where one half of the internship was in a primary grade and the other half was in an intermediate grade. Upon graduation, they were certified to teach in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Since their undergraduate degree was not in elementary education, some were required to take additional content courses, in certain academic areas, in order for them to be deemed highly qualified upon graduation, by the state department of education.

The first alternative intern interviewed, “Alice”, had an undergraduate degree in sociology. Alice had been a substitute teacher and realized that she became a better educator when she observed good teaching. She knew that an internship placement in a high-ranking school system would be important to her, so she fought for it. The first half of Alice’s internship was in a sixth grade language arts class, and her second half was in a second grade classroom.

The second alternative intern interviewed, “Anna”, had an undergraduate degree in business, and had worked in the automotive industry for 15 years before deciding to earn a master’s degree in elementary education. Anna was married with two children. She also, along with Alice, fought and persevered to have her internship placement in a strong and well-revered school system. Her first half of the internship was in a sixth grade middle school class, and her second half was in a third grade classroom in an elementary school.

The third alternative intern interviewed, “Ashley”, had an undergraduate degree in human resources, but had never worked in that field. She was married with children and would rather work with children than adults. Her first half of her internship was in sixth grade in a middle school, and her second half of her internship was in an elementary school second grade class.

Teachers. The four elementary teachers interviewed had mentored traditional interns and alternative interns, and were all seasoned teachers with at least five years of experience in the elementary classroom. The teachers in this study were tenured, highly recognized, and taught in high-ranking school systems. “Ms. Andrews” taught first grade, “Ms. Train” taught first grade, “Ms. Allen” taught second grade, and “Ms. Thomas” taught third grade.

Principals. The four principals interviewed were all assigned to elementary schools in highly ranked school systems. They all took a significant interest in the interns who had been placed in their schools, by observing their teaching and occasionally providing professional development opportunities for them. They had also hosted elementary interns from several teacher preparation programs, including traditional and alternative. The pseudo names of the principals were: “Ms. Penney”, “Ms. Pin”, “Ms. Paul”, and Mr. “Potts”.

Interviewer. The interviewer was the researcher and an elementary teacher with more than 20 years of experience in the elementary classroom. The researcher had an undergraduate

degree in Elementary Education, a masters' degree in Special Education/Gifted Education, certification in Early Childhood, National Board Certification, and at the time of the research was a doctoral student in Elementary Education. The interviewer/researcher had previously supervised elementary education interns and had taught courses to teacher candidates, when filling the role of Teacher in Residence in the Curriculum and Teaching Department, at a traditional accredited university,

Procedures

This was a qualitative collective case study where the researcher had purposefully selected multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issues (Creswell, 2007). Since interns do not always know what they don't know, and therefore may not be fully aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, purposeful sampling strategy was used by including interviews with cooperating teachers of interns and principals of interns (Creswell, 2007). This multiple case study used the logic of replication, by asking the same interview questions to interns, teachers, and principals in order to obtain data from different perspectives on the same issues (Yin, 2003). A pilot study was done through a focus group of interns to determine collection venues and relevant line of questioning (Yin, 2003).

This study consisted of 14 one-on-one interviews, which included interviews with three traditional elementary interns, three alternative elementary interns, four elementary cooperating teachers of traditional and alternative interns, and four elementary principals of traditional and alternative interns. The researcher interviewed interns, cooperating teachers of interns, and principals of interns for the purpose of triangulating data from several sources to ensure validity (Eisner, 1991). In seeking structural collaboration, through multiple sources of related data, the data were supported or contradicted during the evaluation of the issues (Eisner, 1991).

The semi-structured individual interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), each lasting 20 to 40 minutes, took place at the respected elementary schools or the researcher's office. See Appendix A for the Interns' Interview Questions and see Appendix B for the Teachers' and Principals' Interview Questions. All 14 interviews were recorded and then transcribed with all interviewees given pseudo names to protect their anonymity. The data were disaggregated in order to break it down into manageable segments by using codes (Schwandt, 2007). All transcripts were coded by using Atlas.ti., where the codes were determined by the preparedness level, needs, strengths, and weaknesses of the interns mentioned during the interviews. Due to the magnitude number of resulting codes, relating codes were arranged into code families for the purpose of organization and reporting data. See Appendix C for Code and Code Family Book for identification of codes. The resulting data, in the code families, fell into three themes, along with sub themes, which also aided with the organization of the reported data. While identified themes were discreet, there were some overlap. Participants' responses to questions often covered multiple themes and code families.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this study was to discover the interns', teachers', and principals' perceptions of the level of preparedness of the elementary interns as they enter their internships. The researcher wanted to know how elementary interns, and others, viewed the level of an intern's competency.

The following research questions informed this study:

- 1) How do elementary interns, teachers, and principals describe the level of preparedness of interns in the elementary classroom?
- 2) How do elementary interns, teachers, and principals describe the strengths and weaknesses of the elementary interns during their internship?

This study consisted of 14 individual interviews, which included interviews with three traditional elementary interns, three alternative elementary interns, four elementary cooperating teachers of interns, and four elementary principals of interns. The researcher interviewed interns, teachers, and principals for the purpose of triangulating data from several sources in order to ensure validity (Eisner, 1919). All interviewees were given pseudo names to protect their anonymity.

During in-depth interviews, participants described their perceptions and experiences of the elementary intern during internship. They reflected on their strengths and weaknesses in the classroom, and they suggested the types of professional development they thought would be beneficial to the interns when trying to meet the needs of their students.

The strengths and weaknesses were coded and similar codes were grouped into code families (Schwandt, 2007). See Appendix C for the code book. The code families fell into three key themes: Teacher Preparation, Classroom Management, and Meeting the Needs of the Elementary Student. While identified themes were discreet, there was some overlap. Participants' responses to questions often covered multiple themes.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher Preparation is the course of study a teacher candidate has to complete in order to earn a degree in education. This study included two types of teacher preparation programs: traditional and alternative. The traditional teacher preparation program had an undergraduate degree that included university courses along with lab components in public school classrooms. The alternative teacher preparation program had a masters' degree that included university courses along with lab components in public schools, for teacher candidates that had undergraduate degrees in areas outside the field of education.

University Coursework. University Coursework in this study was the required curriculum for a degree in Elementary Education. The code and code family of University Coursework involved the teacher preparation programs and the university courses teacher candidates are required to take before their internship. Along with University Coursework, this code family also included the codes of Reading, Writing, Technology, and Terminology.

Those interviewed in this study felt the interns' content knowledge, in all academic areas, was strong and the instruction in the teacher preparation programs in these areas were reported sufficient. The pre-assessment course and the intern seminar were also beneficial to the interns during their internships. The interns, however, felt there was need for more knowledge in Classroom Management, Special Education, English Language Learners, and Measurement and

Evaluation, since their level of preparedness in these areas was weak. The teachers felt the interns' technology courses needed to include hands-on experience using classroom technology, along with knowledge of electronics available for teaching in the classroom.

Content Knowledge. Content knowledge was information or knowledge about a certain topic or subject. The alternative interns felt their academic classes gave them a sufficient foundation in content knowledge and prepared them well for the elementary classroom. Anna commented:

I feel like all of my courses prepared me [with a basic foundation]. Like the reading, math, science, social studies. I really felt like they prepared me for [the classroom].

Reading. The Reading code included the strengths and weaknesses of the interns in reading content knowledge and reading pedagogies that were included in the teacher preparation coursework and labs. All of the interns felt their reading courses were helpful, and the alternative interns were very impressed with their reading instructor. The alternative interns were also confident in finding their students' needs in reading, but they did not feel they were confident or prepared to find remedies for those needs. The principals felt the interns' reading competency had improved through recent years, but they also felt that professional development in reading is continually beneficial to all educators. The principals also mentioned time management was a need and weakness for all of the interns during classroom reading instruction.

The alternative interns felt their reading courses were extremely beneficial and they felt it was mainly due to their instructor. They felt their reading preparation for internship was excellent, to the point when they attended professional development provided by the state reading program, it was just a review and they did not learn anything new. Alice remarked:

I got so much from the reading classes. I have never learned that much (laughing) in that given amount of time. I can't say enough good things about the reading. It was one of the few classes where I felt like she [the instructor] didn't teach a program. She didn't teach her favorite style. She taught us everything. We went to [the state reading] training last [year] well before internship, and I felt like we'd already been very exposed to everything. The [state reading training] was kind of like wow, we already kind of know this. I felt really fortunate to feel that way, because I don't think a lot of people have that background in reading. She [the instructor] was unbelievable. It was great. Every day we learned so much.

Alice went on to say:

I was in sixth grade language arts [during the first part of my internship] and so I was able to incorporate what I learned about reading into the language arts class. Then [in the second part of the internship in the lower grades] the small reading groups and the whole [class], I'm [feeling] pretty confident with reading. I can't say enough good things about the reading [preparation].

Anna was appreciative that both of the reading classes in the teacher preparation program were together, instead of being at different times. She felt it was more powerful to concentrate on all of the reading strategies at one time, instead of spreading them out in different semesters.

Anna shared:

Yes, we had a wonderful reading course. It was actually two courses, but one in a sense, which I think was great. I think that's a very good strength that they do it [that way]. I feel like you're able to get both of them right then, and it's not like you're taking part of

it here and then part of it another time. You're getting the guided reading, you're getting the read alouds, [and] you're getting all that in one area. Then we had a reading camp at the end. I loved that. That was, I think, real world.

Ashley, another alternative intern, felt that her strength in reading was that she could identify the need, but her weakness was that she did not know how to remedy the need. Ashley explained:

I would say that my strengths would be reading because of the reading program that I had, and the instructors that I had for the reading. This may sound weird, but I think my strength is I know what needs to be done, but then you talk about the weakness, I'm not sure that I know how to get it done.

The traditional interns appreciated that the reading portion of teacher preparation was the only time they were able to implement their own created lessons before internship. Terry commented:

So I got to practice writing lessons for the classroom [during internship], which that was really the first time, besides the reading class, that we implemented our own lessons, so I think that was good.

The principals felt that reading competence in the interns was getting stronger, but there was still a problem with time management when they were teaching reading. It was also mentioned that even though the reading content was stronger, the interns needed to be open to more teacher preparation courses and professional development in reading. Ms. Pin shared:

I do think reading instruction is getting stronger. I don't know [if] that's contributed to some of their experiences with [the state professional development reading program] or that they are engrossed now with so many different curriculums that are differentiated. The time management is a struggle for them in reading, math, or whatever curriculum, just because they are not accustomed to having small groups fit into a 90 minute period.

Mr. Potts stated:

I think reading is a big thing we do in elementary school. So the number of reading classes they would take, if that were increased (would be beneficial). You couldn't have too many (reading courses).

Writing. The code family of Writing addressed how well the interns could write and their content knowledge about the writing process. This code family also included the code of Handwriting.

The principals were the only ones interviewed who mentioned that writing was definitely a weakness and probably the weakest area for interns. According to the principals, the interns had not been prepared to teach handwriting or the process of writing to their students. Ms. Pin explained:

Writing is definitely a weakness. Writing is probably the weakest area I've seen. Often times, not only do they [interns] not know how to teach the modes of writing... they can't recall modes of writing in an interview, or after they get in the classroom. So that is traditionally one of the things, when I'm interviewing, that I try to pick up on, is whether or not they're proficient with that. I'll talk to them about the modes of writing, and I

haven't had one person over the past three years that's been able to tell me [what they are].

Mr. Potts remarked:

Writing would be another [area of need]. I don't know what their [the interns'] preparation is with writing...writing is supposed to be integrated, but you know we've got the new Common Core, and that is supposed to look like writing integrated across all the different subject areas. So more writing in science, more writing in social studies. You definitely need to be writing in math as well. So you're just getting a lot more writing. So more preparation for the interns and how to integrate writing into a lot of subject areas [would be helpful], but overall, maybe, and I don't think it's just my school, writing is something that gets pushed to the back more frequently, because like oh we will get it in with other things. We will get it in with that. We will get it in with something else.

Mr. Potts continued:

Like writing instruction, how [does] that look? Because, I've talked to a lot of teachers about, "Okay it's more than just giving a prompt." Giving them a prompt says, "Okay, write on this subject or write, you know, it's Tuesday, free write Tuesday." Well if I'm a struggler and I'm eight and you say, "Write about your weekend," and you really didn't do anything on the weekend....we just need to do more modeling and more preparation for writing. So writing would be another [need for interns].

The principals also mentioned that the interns did not know anything about handwriting and handwriting instruction. Ms. Pin shared:

[The interns do] not [know] a whole lot to be honest [about handwriting]. They can't tell me programs. They can't talk to me about the different styles of handwriting, particularly if they've been in early childhood. Handwriting is traditionally a weakness.

Terminology. The code of Terminology had to do with the content knowledge of the words and terms used in the field of education. Both the traditional interns and principals felt the interns had a general understanding of the vocabulary specific for the educational community, but they also agreed that the interns were not completely competent in this area and would benefit greatly by having a deeper understanding of these terms and phrases.

The traditional interns felt they had a vague understanding of the different terms and phrases used by educators in today's classrooms. They would appreciate having more in depth knowledge and background understanding of these terms, before they actually experienced these programs, strategies, and pedagogies during their internship.

Tracy mentioned that she had experience with "standards" and was required to put them into her lesson plans during her practicums, but she did not understand the connection of why they were important, and why she had to include them. She would like to have known what is RTI, what is Title I, and how does that work? She was also curious about "the book" of emergency plans for teaching, which is supposed to be in every classroom. Tracy commented:

We had a lot of experience with the standards. We were required to put them [in our] lesson plans, when we turned them in during practicum. But I feel, if we had just more,

[if] there was some connection made there... like the importance of this, why are [we] doing this.

Tracy continued:

I would hear a lot of the teachers talk the language that's used in the classroom: RTI, and what is the book called? You have to have one in your classroom, and it's like the emergency plan, but anything like that [would be helpful]. More information about Title I and how Title I works, or just that stuff that goes on in the classroom, because I felt kind of unknowledgeable as far as that goes.

The principals felt the interns were somewhat knowledgeable about educational terminology, but probably did not have an in-depth understanding. Ms. Paul explained:

I think they're keeping up with, [such things as] RTI. They come in knowledgeable about some of the buzzwords we've got flying around. They may not know a lot about them, but they've heard "differentiated instruction." They know what RTI is. They know what an IEP looks like [and a] 504 plan. None of that is new to them, [along with] Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3. When you say, "Title I" most of them are knowledgeable of what that program is.

Mr. Potts felt the interns were familiar with educational terminology, but needed a more in-depth understanding. He gave an example of interviewing an intern for a teaching position.

Mr. Potts commented:

When we interviewed [an intern] the other day for a teaching position, [the buzzwords would appear]. People would use the buzzwords that they'll all use. One person [on the

interview committee] said, “What would you do for this child? This child is struggling.”
[The intern replied:] “Well I would differentiate.” [The interviewer:] “Okay.”

Mr. Potts went on to say:

[The intern] got the word right. [She] used it in the right context, but I don’t know what [she would] do. Yeah we all know that [she would] differentiate. How would that look? I didn’t make the person elaborate, but later on she said, “I’d differentiate, with pulling something off the computer.” That’s all good and well, but that’s not really teaching.

Classroom Management. The interns interviewed felt classroom management was a weakness for them and wished they were better prepared in this area.

The alternative interns felt they needed to have a class on classroom management or have it integrated throughout other coursework. When they inquired about a course on classroom management, they were informed that they were supposed to learn classroom management during the time they spent in the classroom, through their labs or practicums. The alternative interns did mention that, at times, they were able to observe classroom management in action during their labs, but they never quite learned how to implement it. Anna shared:

You got to see [classroom management during] all of our hours [in the classroom], which was a good [thing] that we got to see different styles. We got to see what worked and what we thought might not work, but as far as an actual [university] class, it didn’t [happen], and I think that would be something to think about. Maybe even including that in with something else [integrating it into already existing classes].

Even though they had a classroom management course during teacher preparation, the traditional interns felt they needed more instruction and experience in this area. Terry remarked:

I think classroom management needs to be hit harder. I don't think it was (pause) taken as seriously [as it needed to be], and then getting in the classroom you're like, "Oh my gosh, I really, really need this."

Special Education. All of the interns agreed that the Special Education course did not prepare them at the level they needed when trying to meet the needs of their students. The alternative interns felt their Special Education class was not beneficial once they were in their internship classrooms. They felt it would have been helpful if the class had focused on the different teaching strategies that could be used with students of special needs. Anna shared:

We all learn in a lot of different ways. I try to be very conscious of that in the classroom. We all have different needs is the way I think about it, and everyone learns differently. We're taught this. So [we need different strategies].

The traditional interns also wished their Special Education course had taught strategies to use in the classroom. Their course discussed the different types of disabilities, which was beneficial, but it would have been helpful to include strategies that could be used with their own students.

Tina stated:

I do wish there were either more, or I hate to say this, maybe a more effective Special Education course, because I know not every intern was in an inclusion class. Maybe that Special Education class, [or] another one, or that one [could be] more situational. I

luckily took a developmental disability class which was cool, because I was interested in Special Education and things like that [and it helped].

Tina continued:

This is the situation, if you have a student on this level, you [need to] know what you could do to accommodate this lesson, or things like that, because my teacher really had to help me through that at first. I think our first teaching day it did really come up. I was like, “Oh my goodness, what am I going to [do]?”, because she pulls a student, this one student every day, and works really close with her for about 20 minutes, almost like her own reading group. At first I was like I don’t really know [how to do that], because I’d watched her, but I didn’t really know how to do that myself. So, I can’t imagine jumping into my own classroom and having [an inclusion class]. I don’t know if they give first year teachers inclusion classes, and they may. You never know, but I don’t know if I would have been prepared for that. I would have had to learn very quickly. I think now [because of my internship I] would be much more effective at the beginning if I, in a future classroom, had that [inclusion class].

Tracy shared:

I did not really experience this, this semester, but in my three-day practicum I was in an inclusion classroom and I felt extremely ill prepared for that. Extremely.

English Language Learners. The interns felt they were not prepared to work with English Language Learners in their classrooms. The traditional interns mentioned they needed a course that included strategies to use when working with students who are English Language Learners. Terry remarked:

I know there's a lot of situations... that are going to come up. You can't do anything about it, and you just have to take it and figure it out as you go, but I think having preparation for ELL [would have been beneficial].

Measurement and Evaluation. The interns felt pre-assessing students was one of their strengths, but they were not competent in creating their own quizzes or tests. The alternative interns felt their teacher preparation program emphasized the importance of pre-assessments and quickly figuring out the strengths and weaknesses of each child in the classroom. They were taught it was extremely important for teachers to know each of their students' needs and how to meet them. Anna stated:

Meeting the students' needs, I think as an intern, that's one of the things that I've thought I've got to figure out immediately. I've got to find out each child's [needs]. I've got to learn their strengths and weaknesses quickly, so I know where to take them. So, I do think the benefits of our classes [included] teaching us you've got to have pre-assessments.

The alternative interns also thought the online course in Measurement and Evaluation was weak. Alice shared:

The measurement and evaluation course was very weak. It was an online course. We've actually had a lot of problems. Every single person I know and I had our only B [and it] was in that class, and we have no idea in a measurement class why we got a B (laughing), because there's no feedback. I don't feel like I'm very ready to be able to create my own quiz or test that's appropriate and fair to all children.

Intern Seminar. The alternative interns mentioned a class that was very beneficial, like a development class or seminar that they took during their internship, on several Fridays at their university. During this time, active classroom teachers would meet with them, answer questions, and give them classroom advice and tips. Anna reported:

You know right now in our internship, there's [a class], it's like a developmental [class]. We'll go to the university [to meet]. So many Fridays we've had these, and they've been fabulous. We've talked to people that are actually in the class, teachers that are actually in the classroom, and [they] gave us tips. There was a woman that came in and talked about classroom management and just some tips and things she has found that have worked. Things like that, because we do have plenty of lab hours. We had [more than] 200 [hours] which was fabulous, but sometimes when you're in there, the teachers don't always have time to stop and give you these, fun little nuggets, that you can take away.

Anna continued:

We read books, I mean we do all this, but I feel like those little pockets [of information] that we've gotten [from the interns' seminar] have been so valuable to me. I feel like when you get out there in the world... for me I've got a little file where I've been storing

all of those sort of things. We can learn all [this information], everything to do with them, [but] when you actually go and apply it, I think that's something.

History of Education. The alternative interns mentioned that they did not feel the History of Education course during teacher preparation was necessary. Anna remarked:

There were some courses, one in particular, which I heard they were doing away with [and it] was the historical [class]. It was like the history of education. I think I heard the university is cutting it out... probably I think it was good to learn about where our education came from...the background, but I don't know that I am going to use that out here in the real world.

Cohort Classes. The traditional interns mentioned that they wished certain courses were taught within their own cohort and not the general education population. They felt if the Special Education class could focus on elementary education situations, it would have been more beneficial for the interns. Terry commented:

I know it's hard to cram it all into the cohort program, but even things like Special Education and the reading courses [would have been better in the cohort]. If they were within your cohort, it could be more direct [to elementary education] rather than... like Special Education was just general for any education. So I had people in there who were [in] agriculture education. Well, they're probably not going to deal with IEPs, but we are.

Technology. Technology in this study dealt with the effective use, in the classroom, of technology tools and equipment during instruction and learning. The alternative interns and the

teachers felt the interns were not prepared and needed to have more experience in classroom technology, especially with the use of Smart Boards. The traditional interns were confident with their technology skills, but once they were in the internship classroom they realized, they needed to make technology one of their strengths.

The alternative interns felt they needed to have a strong technology course that incorporated the use of Smart Boards, as a part of their teacher preparation curriculum.

Ashley commented:

One other thing that I think would be helpful is [if] we had a really good technology course. I think we need to incorporate Smart Boards, into that, because a lot of the classes and schools have Smart Boards, whiteboards, different things like that. So I think incorporating that into the technology [would be] good, because I was fumbling like crazy when I first started trying to use the Smart Board (laughing). I was like what? The kids were laughing at me, they were like, you put the eraser down first then you can... I mean you know simple things like that, but I never had to use one [before internship]. So, I've got the hang of it now (laughing).

The traditional interns were appreciative of their technology course when they reached their internships. If technology was a personal weakness of theirs, they soon recognized the fact that they needed to work hard and make it a personal strength. Terry reflected:

I learned how to toughen up, how to work with technology, because that was a big weakness that I had.

The teachers also felt the interns needed to be more apt and experienced with classroom technology. Teachers today are required to integrate technology throughout the school day. The

interns have had a technology course, during teacher preparation, but many only seem to have superficial knowledge of classroom technology during their internship. Ms. Andrews commented:

They've [the interns] also had classes where they've had to use the technology, the Smart Board and all those things. My intern, she's coming in [the classroom], and she's kind of okay with [technology]. I mean she's gotten better, much better with the Smart Board, but she just had to come in [and try to learn as she goes]. Okay everything's done on the Smart Board. You know it's not [easy for her].

Online Courses. The alternative interns felt the online courses, which were part of the teacher preparation program and taught by departments outside of elementary education, were ineffective. They also felt it would be easy to create these classes to be beneficial to teacher candidates. The courses consisted of completing an assignment and then taking a test. There was no instruction or interaction. Alice remarked:

I think there's a lot of great things about our program but [not] the online classes, and those are mainly in other departments. The Foundations or just general education courses [and] the Special Education were online. All my methods classes and our department, Elementary Education, didn't teach online classes.

Alice continued:

I think that online classes... I've heard of some at different places being really good and interactive. You know ours would say respond to two people on Blackboard in a discussion post there. What bothered me was there was not [any] instruction. There was

not a taped lecture. There was not a PowerPoint that explained these concepts. So it was teach yourself and we'll test you. So I would have preferred someone to teach me, because I am paying for that, and I need to know it. I mean I need to know it (laughing).

Alice also added:

They can go to working with a TV type thing, and you can see other people. That makes so much more sense. It could be done that way, but in my experience, it has not been.

Field Experiences. Field Experiences in this study were the part of a college curriculum that provided, under supervision, experience and/or work in the field of study. Field Experiences usually included classroom labs, practicums, and internships.

Classroom Labs. Classroom Labs and/or Practicums, in this study, were addendums to individual college courses, where the teacher candidates had an opportunity, under supervision, to practice in the field of study the methodologies or pedagogies they had learned during a course. These clinical hours also gave the teacher candidates an opportunity to gain experience working in the classroom and interacting with students. The Code Family of Classroom Labs, in this study, included the codes of Classroom Labs, Classroom Observation Skills, Classroom Interaction, Duration of Classroom Labs, and Summer School.

All of those who were interviewed felt the classroom interaction, during quality lab experiences, helped the teacher candidates to become confident and competent interns. Everyone agreed that the interns would benefit from increased quality experiences in the classroom.

The alternative interns participated in required labs with several of their teacher preparation courses. Before internship, they had accumulated more than 200 hours in the field, including 20 hours in an infant daycare center, for their developmental process course. The

alternative interns' degree certifies them in Pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade, so they needed a lab with preschool children. The alternative interns stressed repeatedly the importance of high quality lab experiences.

The traditional interns had two full days of labs in the classroom one semester, and then three full days the next semester, when doing their classroom labs or practicums for their methods courses in teacher preparation. In addition, they also had labs with their reading, music, and physical education classes. The traditional interns unanimously felt that the two days/three days a week labs were significantly more beneficial, than the previous lab schedule that consisted of one morning and one afternoon a week, for classroom labs. If one of their labs had to be summer school, they felt it was better to have completed a two or three-day lab prior to the summer school lab.

Classroom interaction. Classroom interaction revealed the experiences lab students had with actual student contact in the classroom.

Ashely, an alternative intern, felt her labs did not give her enough experience working with large groups of students. She said that most of her observations and lab hours were with small groups of three or four students for literature circles and writer's workshops. Due to the fact she needed to work with small groups, Ashley felt this was beneficial, but she did wonder what she was going to do in a classroom of 21 students. Her science lab was a summer workshop, so the only lab experiences she had in front of a whole classroom was her social studies lab. Ashley wasn't sure if a remedy for her situation was more lab hours or different lab experiences, but she did not feel prepared to teach in front of a whole class of students. She did feel that she needed more clinical time in the classroom before internship. Ashley commented:

So our lab hours and observations, it wasn't like a classroom. It was like language arts and writers workshop. We just pulled out three or four kids from a class, and had a small group for literature circles and things like that. Which is great, because I know you need small group as well, but then what do you do when you're in a classroom of 21 kids?

Ashley continued:

Social studies, was my only whole group. Well, social studies and then science we had like a summer camp type thing, because it was over the summer. But it wasn't any [thing] like coming into a second grade and teaching the whole classroom. So it wasn't the same thing. You know it's different teaching three children right here versus coming in and trying to do 21. To me there is a disconnect there. So I don't know if it needs to be a longer internship or longer lab hours or just something in between ...probably [both]. Probably more clinical.

Classroom observations. Classroom observations occurred when the teacher candidates spent time in the classroom watching and observing classroom interactions and activities. Alice, an alternative intern, said that her classroom labs consisted of 250 hours of observing teachers. She clarified that by saying that most of her time in the classroom was actually observing the teacher, and not interacting with students, unless she had a teacher who was willing for her to jump in and help. It was very inconsistent and up to the teacher. Alice remarked:

Each of our courses, I probably should've stated, we've done 10 to 20 hours of observation. So I have 250 hours of observing other teachers. Somewhat [observing]. That's another, it's inconsistent. So if you get a teacher that wants you to jump in there. That's kind of up to the teacher.

Quality of lab experiences. Quality of Lab Experiences dealt with the quality level of benefits it provided for teacher candidates during their classroom experiences. The quality of the lab experience could also be determined by the quality level of competency a classroom community had in engaging students in learning and helping them to achieve.

The traditional interns felt their experiences in labs and internship were all different when looking at classroom management, teacher responsibilities, school procedures, and the ability level of students in different classes in the same grade. They soon realized that every class was different. They also felt their two and three days a week labs prepared them well for internship, but not enough to skip internship and go straight to the classroom. Even with all of this experience before internship, they were still making new discoveries of teacher responsibilities in the classroom during their internship. Tina shared:

I thought the schools that I've been to in my lab experiences and internship have been very different in the way things run. The teachers have been different and the students have been different. I do believe it prepared me for internship, but I don't think after those first few lab experiences before internship, I could have handled my own classroom. I guess we just didn't spend enough time, even though we spent a lot. I don't think the classroom management in my practicums, were as strong as the one in my internship. They were just very different, the way the classrooms were run, and my internship was luckily much more how I would see myself running a classroom. I had a great experience, in each one of those, but they were very different.

It was during her internship, when Tina discovered all the daily little things that are a teacher's responsibility, and at times can be overwhelming. She did not realize how many nonacademic duties were teacher responsibilities until she arrived in her internship classroom.

Tina added that this discovery was probably due to the fact that during labs she was like a teacher's aide, and during internship she was more of a co-teacher. Tina remarked:

One thing that I noticed pretty early was my organization skills. Once I was in the classroom, I didn't realize how many duties, how many things a teacher actually has to do. That was, I think, really eye opening to me, once I was learning through internship. Each week, I learned something new that my teacher did, that I didn't really realize before. So once it hit the fourth or fifth week it was so much more than classroom management and grading papers. Which is what a typical teacher, like what we all think [does]. It's so much more than that, [such as] how the kids get home, how money's brought in for field trips, lunches every day, doing attendance, putting chairs up at a certain time, making sure you are somewhere on time, making sure you have this grade. You need spelling, you need grammar, and you need the fresh reads. You need all of this and (laughing) there's so many things that I didn't realize before. I guess I wasn't as involved, and I didn't realize this until internship, but I guess I wasn't as involved in my practicum classroom as I was in internship. I guess I really didn't have that many duties in my practicum.

Tina continued:

What was interesting about that, too, is the second grade, I almost felt [it] was like the same level as my first grade for internship. I know it was different school districts and very different, but I almost felt like they were at the same level about learning and even behaviorally.

Tina's traditional teacher preparation program had the classroom labs that consisted of the teacher candidates spending two full days a week in the classroom, two semesters before internship, and three full days a week in the classroom the semester before internship. This was more pre-internship classroom experience than most traditional teacher preparation programs provided. When Tina was asked if her two full days a week and three full days a week methods course classroom labs had helped her with her classroom management, she said yes and no. During her labs, she had time to experience different teaching styles and make connections with her students, which aided her in having a higher level of confidence during internship. She indicated that all of her situations were different teaching styles, which incorporated different learning situations. She learned from them, but her classroom management in her internship was stronger, and that is where she gained most of her confidence. Tina contributed:

I thought the schools that I've been to in my lab experiences and internship have been very different in the way they have run things. The teachers have been different and the students have been different. I do believe that it prepared me for internship, but I don't think after those first few lab experiences before internship, I could have handled my own classroom. I don't think the classroom management [systems] in my practicums [or lab experiences] were as strong as the one in my internship. They were just very different the way the classrooms were run, and my internship was luckily much more how I would see myself running a classroom.

Tracy, a traditional intern, added that she took her classroom management class seriously, and she learned from it. She continued and said she felt it also helped, that classroom management in her lab placements was strong. In fact, during her first lab, she was given the opportunity, in a sixth grade classroom, to create her own management plan, and try its

effectiveness on the students. Being that it was sixth grade, she knew she really had to be on her toes with the older students. She felt that this experience helped to give her confidence in the other grades and stated:

Our classroom management classes, I think that was really beneficial too. I know [in] my first classroom management class we were introduced to all kinds of different techniques and things that not being in the classroom, I would have never considered or wouldn't have experienced before. Also the teacher prep we had being in the classroom [during labs or practicums] and seeing firsthand how it works [was beneficial]. The classes at the university were great about preparing us and teaching us things, but I didn't really make a connection until I got in the classroom. I've had some really great experiences [with classroom management during labs].

Anna, an alternative intern, felt that she did have enough lab hours prior to internship, and did not feel she learned what she needed to learn, and therefore did not feel as prepared for internship as she should be. Anna described busy teachers who were unable to sit down and mentor the teacher candidates. Anna reflected:

We did have plenty of lab hours. We had [more than] 200 [hours] which was fabulous, but sometimes when you're in there, the teachers don't always have time to stop and just give you these fun little nuggets, you know that you can take away.

Ms. Allen, a second grade teacher, felt that the best way to instruct pre-service teachers was through classroom interaction. She said her interns were overwhelmed when they arrived at her second grade classroom and discovered that every student was on a different reading level. They needed to differentiate and they were unfamiliar and unprepared on how to do that. She

believed that experience of interacting with students, in a quality classroom, was the best teacher for her lab students and interns. Ms. Allen remarked: “Nothing beats experience. Experience, experience, experience.”

Duration of classroom labs. Duration of classroom labs was the amount of time a teacher candidate was scheduled to be gaining experience in the classroom.

Terry, a traditional intern, liked the increased progression of lab hours throughout the teacher preparation program. Terry commented:

I like how [my university’s] program, as you go up in the program, your time in the classroom increases, so it’s a gradual process. I know like other education programs here, they only go half day three days a week and then they hit their internship, so they’ve never been in a classroom a full day. I think you need to be able to see that. So I like the gradual process.

That being said, Terry did have an exception to her thinking. Terry had summer school for her first classroom lab, and her second methods lab was three full days in the classroom. She wished it had been reversed. During summer school, she and her partner were paired with two other lab students who had already had the two full days a week in the classroom lab. The other lab students really knew what they were doing, especially with classroom management, and were light years ahead of Terry. Terry said she was intimidated and always felt like she was drowning as she tried to keep up with the other experienced lab students. Terry went on to say that she felt she would have benefited more from participating in the remediation and intense instruction in summer school, if she had had more experience in the classroom and had a better handle on what she was doing. Terry shared:

I don't think summer school [lab experience] was beneficial. I didn't have a good experience with it... because we didn't really get to know the kids. We were only with them for a couple hours. The teachers pretty much knew everything about them anyways, and so they didn't really tell us. So I feel like if maybe the semester before... go in all day just to get experience in that classroom and spend a significant amount of time with kids, because those three weeks I feel like I didn't (pause) really get anything out of it. I don't think it benefited me as a teacher. I learned how to toughen up, how to work with technology, because that was a big weakness that I had. So I got to practice writing lessons for the classroom. That was really the first time, besides the reading class, that we implemented our own lessons, so I think that was good. But in terms of really getting to connect, and real practice for the classroom, I don't think that part benefited us.

Terry continued:

We were paired [during the summer lab placement] with another cohort who had already done their three days a week in the classroom. So they were light years ahead of us in terms of management skills and being natural in the classroom. It was, I think, more intimidating than a learning experience, because I felt like I was compared to them, and I was with two others. I think if you are going to be paired, if it needs to be in your same cohort or at your level in the program, so that it's not intimidating [that would be better].

Terry added:

I thought about this after I finished my [three days a week lab] experience. If I was doing my summer then, and just knowing more about being in the classroom, especially

summer school, kids are either there because their struggling, they're being retained, [or] they're there for behavior, and so having those three days a week [experience] you would be able to know what to do.

The cooperating teachers that were interviewed felt strongly that classroom management was a need for the interns, which could be helped tremendously if the interns had more experience and classroom interaction with the students, prior to internship. They commented that the interns try to find answers to classroom management in textbooks, with no success. They think they have a good idea of what they are supposed to do from the way it reads in a book. They know what to teach and how to teach it, by the book, but when they actually do it with the student interaction, it was different. They need experience in the classroom to find classroom management strategies that will fit their own personalities. Ms. Allen commented:

Experience, experience, experience [is what the interns need]. I think that classroom management is the key. If they don't have classroom management they can't teach. When they [the interns] come, I think they're very enthusiastic and they are ready to do what they need to do. I think everybody has a good idea of what they think they're supposed to do. They know what they are supposed to teach and how to teach it, the way it reads in a book. When you actually do it, it's a little different.

The teachers all agreed that they saw a huge difference and a greater level of preparedness in the traditional interns when they have had the two full days a week and then three full days a week of lab experiences before internship, compared to the previous labs of one morning and one afternoon a week.

Ms. Thomas, a third grade teacher, said the teacher candidates get a better picture of the whole classroom, when they see a full day instead of two hours here and there. They actually become a part of the classroom and a co-teacher, instead of a visitor to the room, but they still knew that the teacher was in charge. Ms. Thomas observed:

I have noticed a huge difference in the interns at the beginning [of their internship], [from] several years ago, when they did not have the [day long] lab experience, where now they're doing the lab experience, where they are in the classroom for three whole days. I have seen a huge difference there. I think they get a better picture of the whole picture. They see an entire day. With three full days they really become a part of the classroom. If they're good, they really do kind of become a co-teacher, but they get the teacher is still in charge.

The principals agreed with the teachers and have found strength in the model of the two and three full days in the classroom for labs. They had seen a remarkable difference in confidence and competence in the traditional interns, after they have had more classroom exposure. Ms. Paul's, an elementary school principal, remarked:

One of the things I've noticed, over the last couple years, is the interns that we're getting, that were part of a math and science [labs] where they were in a school for three days a week, or two days a week, and then three days a week the next semester [are stronger than their predecessors]. I'm finding that there's strength in that, because they've seen it, and they've been there and done that.

Mr. Potts, an elementary school principal, commented:

Now I like that model [two days a week lab and then three days a week lab]. We've seen it mostly when I've worked with the science professor. I think [it is] great exposure to being around teachers. Their increased exposure being in the classroom, seeing teachers, [and actually] teaching themselves, I just think they can't have enough preparation.

Ms. Penney, an elementary school principal, said that she felt deeply about the importance of these future teachers being in the schools as much as possible from the get go, and being where it is most applicable. One of her school mothers went back and earned a teaching degree and told her that she learned the most once she got into the schools. Ms. Penney stated:

My whole feeling is that these kids, these future teachers, need to be in these schools as much as possible. I'm talking about from the get go. One of our school mothers, who [just earned] her [teaching degree], I feel like she can tell you she learned the most once she got in the schools. It is just being where the rubber hits the road.

Ms. Pin, an elementary school principal, said it would be nice if they could do their lab work and internship at the same school, so they could have that professional growth and comfort of being in one place and knowing the logistics and expectations. She also liked the fact the alternative interns split their internship between primary and intermediate grades, except for the fact, they needed the experience of a full-length internship at each level, so they would experience such things as parent conferences, and the opening and closing of a school year.

Ms. Pins commented:

Ideally, what I'd like to see, I think it would be really nice to have someone [preservice teachers] do their lab work and then do their internship in the same school so they

could have that professional growth, and they could have that comfort of being in one place. Knowing the logistics. Knowing the expectations. I know that we try to get them in different grades, primary and [intermediate] elementary. I think there's a lot to be said for having a lengthy experience. I like the idea of giving them an internship that's halved with the nine weeks and nine weeks. Except, for the fact that, I'm not too sure they don't need that full experience to have gone through parent conferences, to have gone through opening or closing a school, that kind of thing.

Internship. The teacher candidate's internship was a semester long and was a supervised, fulltime, on-the-job training that usually culminated the teacher preparation program. The Internship Code Family included the codes of Internship, Application, Collaboration, Competence/Confidence, Math /Science Confidence, Teacher Evaluation, Duration of Internship, and Intern Seminar.

Internship starting the first day of school. Interns, teachers, and principals, who were interviewed for this study, all strongly felt the need for interns to experience a teacher's pre-teaching days, the days before the school year starts, and the first week of school. They all felt this was a weakness and need, and it would help with the level of preparedness, if interns were able to partake in classroom activities before and during the beginning of the school year. The teacher candidates would benefit from experiencing all that it entails to set up a classroom before the students arrive, and they would benefit from witnessing how classroom community building is implemented during the first week of school.

Even though Terry, a traditional intern, felt comfortable with classroom management, she did feel that she struggled with it a bit. Terry felt one of her strongest needs during internship was understanding classroom and behavior management. She attributed this to starting her

internship in January, instead of at the beginning of the school year, in August. Her internship started after the students had already learned classroom procedures, so she was not sure how to implement that process. She felt that she would be more competent and confident in classroom management, if she could have witnessed the implementation process. Terry shared:

If I had to pick one thing to change about the program, it would be to see a classroom at the very beginning of the year. I think understanding behavior management [is a need]. Well, both behavior and classroom management I struggled with a bit. I don't know if that's because my internship started in January, so it was already halfway through the year, and the kids knew what was going on [when I arrived in the classroom].

Terry also revealed:

I haven't seen a first day of school, since I was in elementary school. Even for practicum we started a month and a half into school [year]. So I think being able to see the first two weeks of school when they implement all of that would be really beneficial, because I felt like a lot of the questions I asked my internship teacher were, "Okay, when you first started your behavior management plan, how did you teach it?" I don't even know how to start it, or implement it.

Ms. Thomas, a third grade teacher, commented that it would be extremely beneficial if interns could experience how to teach community in a classroom. They needed to know how to teach routines, rules, lunch count, classroom jobs, etc. They also needed to experience training students to be responsible citizens of the class. Ms. Thomas asked if there was any way interns could be in the classroom at the beginning of the school year so they would have an opportunity to learn these skills. Ms. Thomas commented:

I think that it would be so beneficial [for the interns]. Just to see how do you teach community? How do you teach routines? How do you teach the rules? How do you teach a kid how to do the lunch count? If you've got 20, I've got 18 jobs. How do I train [the students], and they change [jobs] every week? How do you train kids to do that? How do you train them? Because you think, surely they are going to know. Well it's going to be 18 weeks before one child gets to do this job, and they're going to have forgotten my training by then.

Ms. Train, another teacher that was interviewed, remarked that she would rather have her interns during fall semester instead of spring semester, due to classroom management. She said her spring interns came into her first grade classroom saying this is great. The students were independent workers and could think freely for themselves. They still needed guidance and instruction, but they knew what to do and how to do it. The interns never witnessed them getting from "point A", where the students were at the beginning of the year, to "point D", which is where they were when the interns entered the classroom in January. The interns had missed a large part of the instruction. Ms. Train explained:

They've missed a huge piece of how it all came to be. It's automatically, they're coming in and looking at it going, "Oh this is great. They're independent workers. They can think freely for themselves." Yes, you still have to guide and instruct and all of that's going on non-stop, but they didn't see what it took to get from point "A" now to point "D", which is where we are when they come in, if that makes sense. They missed a huge part of that instruction. They're coming into something that's already established for a class.

Ms. Pin, a principal who was interviewed, went on to say it was important that the interns be very consistent right from the beginning and she has tried to impose, with her teachers, the importance of the first two weeks, and referred to the Harry Wong books on classroom management. Classroom communities and procedures needed to be taught, and the classroom tone needed to be set during the first two weeks of school. The interns will not have a more attuned group of students than they will have those first two weeks. Ms. Pin shared:

I think the important thing is being very consistent right up front. We always try to impose the importance of that first two weeks like the Harry Wong book, and training children to be exactly what you want them to be. You're not going to have a more attune group than those first two weeks, so train them in the procedural kinds of things and set the tone, because after a certain period, your reputation is set.

Duration of internship. Many of the teachers and principals who were interviewed felt that the internship needed to be longer, but did not know if that was feasible.

Ms. Train, a first grade teacher, still felt that the interns needed more exposure to the classroom, and that they were only getting a small piece of the puzzle. If their internship started at the beginning of the year, they missed all of the events at the end of the year. If their internship was during spring semester, then they missed all of the strategies used to get the students at the level where they were, when they were introduced to the intern in January.

Ms. Train stated:

[The interns need] more exposure to the classroom. I mean I understand the labs, and I understand the internship, but I feel like they're only getting a small piece to that puzzle. If they come in at the beginning of the year, they're missing all of the stuff that [happens

at the] end of the year. If they come in at the second half of the year, they've missed all that stuff [implementation of procedures and community] to get it [the class] prepared to that point. So I feel like they're only seeing [a part of the process].

Split internships. Split internships divided the time spent during internship between two or more areas or locations.

The alternative internship for elementary interns, in this study, was split in half between an upper grade classroom and a lower grade classroom. The alternative interns felt that it was beneficial to them to have their internship split with one half in a primary grade classroom and the other half in an intermediate grade classroom.

Anna explained:

It's a big difference between a kindergartener and a sixth grader. I liked it for the fact, [that we were able to do two different grades for our internship since] I didn't get to see every grade [during teacher preparation].

The principals mentioned that it would be helpful if the interns could do their practicums and internship at the same school, so they would have that professional growth and would have experienced the comfort of being and belonging in the same school community. They liked the idea of the interns being able to experience both an upper grade and lower grade during their internship, but they also felt it was important for them to have the full school experience with parent conferences and the opening and closing of the school year. Ms. Pin commented:

Ideally, what I'd like to see would depend on whether you've got someone who was good and proficient. Most of them are. They've gotten to that level. I think it would be really nice to have someone do their lab work and then do their internship in the same school so

they could have that professional growth and that comfort of being in one place.

Knowing the logistics. Knowing the expectations. I know we try to get them in different grades, primary and elementary. I think there's a lot to be said for having a lengthy experience. I like the idea of giving them an internship that's halved with the nine weeks [in a lower grade] and nine weeks [in an upper grade]. Except, for the fact, I'm not too sure that they don't need that full experience to have gone through parent conferences, to have gone through the opening or closing of a school, that kind of thing.

Observations during internship. The teachers remarked that observing was a weakness for several of the interns, and it was often obvious that they were not prepared on how to observe a classroom. The interns indicated that observations during internship were beneficial if there were objectives in mind.

Ms. Andrews, a first grade teacher, commented that an intern was observing her during their intervention and enrichment time in second grade, where they have small groups of students in math and reading. She asked the intern, afterward, if she could tell the difference between the groups. The intern replied yes and said that one of the groups was learning reading and another group was reading chapter books, and she did not mention the other groups. Ms. Andrews did not feel this intern was going to be able to group the students according to their needs. After the intern had interaction with the students, she was able to figure out who needed extra help on different skills, and who needed to be pulled at different times during the day. Ms. Andrews felt that having more classroom interaction during labs would help the interns with differentiation in the classroom. Ms. Andrews explained:

We have an intervention and enrichment time in the afternoon for second grade, and we have small groups in math and reading. So I always try to make sure, when the intern is

sitting and observing, I'll say, "Okay could you tell the difference between my groups?" She said yes. This one, you can tell this group is still kind of learning reading and this group is reading chapter books. It's like yeah so it's different, and [it is the same with] math groups too. I asked her, "How would you group these people?" [After some classroom interaction] I think she's [finally] gotten the idea where in the afternoon she knows who to pull and who to help and how to help them if we are doing an activity together. I told her you just immediately look at it and you can see. This person needs help, let me pull them or let me have a small group with you. Come to the table and everybody else just do rotations. So I think, she's doing it. I don't know if she came in being able to group the kids.

Ms. Thomas felt that the interns needed to be guided on how to observe a classroom. She felt it would be helpful if they had an agenda for each observation. Ms. Thomas suggested:

I don't know how you train them [the interns], unless they maybe go in and look [observe]. [The interns should be told] these are your look "fors": How is a teacher taking up papers? How is a teacher designing her room? How is a teacher communicating with parents? How are you going to do your classroom helpers? How are you going to do behavior? How are you going to record it? How are you going to...? It's those little things. The little things that can be overwhelming to an intern, I think, because they certainly are to a new teacher. Then you've got all the extra, "active participation" and "quality questioning". All those sort of things.

When Tina, a traditional intern, was asked why she thought classroom management was one of her strengths, she related to the classroom observations during the first two weeks of her

internship. She said, during this time, she really observed the classroom activities. She noticed not only the big things, like moving the individual behavior clips up and down the behavior chart, but also the little things that transpired between the teacher and students that were helpful to keep the students in line, such as a tap on the shoulder, or just a “you need to come here”. She said that she learned from these observations, and they helped give her the confidence she needed to run a classroom. Tina reflected:

I think it’s from really just taking it in and seeing what my teacher did and how each one of the students [reacted]. That first week we just sat back and really learned, but [I also] really observed the students and really observed our teacher. I was able to notice all the little things my teacher did that kept them in line, because it’s not just the big things like go clip up, clip down, or whatever it may be [on the behavior chart]. It’s the little things, even if it’s just a tap on the shoulder, or just a, “you need to come here.” Just really sitting back and observing that first week and some of that second week and getting into it, [not only] helped me with the content [knowledge], but [also with] the classroom management at that point.

Some of the teachers felt that interns should just observe the first two weeks of the internship and take in as much as they can, before co-teaching and doing their 10 days of consecutive teaching. This would also be a good time to observe other classes instead of waiting to the end of the internship, when this opportunity was often skipped due to end of the semester stress and trying to complete last minute tasks. At the end of the internship in the elementary classroom, when the interns were fully connected to the class, it was hard for the interns to get away to observe other classes. Observing other classrooms could be extremely beneficial to the interns and needed to be an important part of the internship. Ms. Thomas explained:

I think it's good for them to get into other classrooms. I don't know if that would be a good time, maybe even at the beginning instead of at the end. Because, I know my intern was so overwhelmed the first two weeks, because she felt the need to be a co-teacher right then. Really, I just wanted her to watch. But to watch all day long every day, it's a lot. Then at the end I was like, "I don't want you not to get last minute stuff in and we're trying to get... we've got field trips and we've got this." Then she didn't get to go into some of the classrooms. Where at the beginning, it might be good to be able to go in and see the observations before you start teaching so you can see some of how the other classrooms are set up. Because [my intern] was very overwhelmed. Now I'm sort of an unconventional teacher and it can be overwhelming.

Prepared for internship. Several of the students felt they were not prepared on what to expect when they entered their internship classroom. Some were overconfident at first, and then quickly became stressed and felt they were in over their heads.

Tracy, a traditional Intern, felt the most stressful part of the internship was the paper work. She wished she had a master checklist at the beginning, that she could follow to make sure she knew all of the intern's submission dates, and when everything had to be done. Tracy also revealed:

I'll be honest, when I walked into my internship I was very confident. I was like, "I got this." But then I quickly realized I didn't. But that was okay, because I'd never...I hadn't planned an entire day yet. I was responsible for those kids in my three day [a week] practicum, but not to the extent that I was for these. I was on my own, responsible for these kids. So I mean for the 10 day teach. It wasn't like I couldn't say "Hey cooperating teacher are you going to cover this today?" It was all independent. She was

just very welcoming, and I mean she put me up there and put me in it. That's why I had such a good experience, because she wasn't scared to let go. But then she was also making sure that what needed to be done was done. So it was a good experience, really good experience. Honestly, when I first got in my classroom, I was extremely overwhelmed. I was like, "Oh, I don't know how to...", because at first we were so... our [cooperating teacher and intern] personalities kind of clashed, but I could not have asked for a better experience, because we fed off of each other's strengths and weaknesses. I really don't know that there's anything I would change [about internship], because even though it was difficult at times, that was what made [it]. I learned from that.

The teachers felt that the interns come into their internship and were immediately overwhelmed by all of the responsibilities a teacher has besides just teaching. During their practicums, they were able to experience creating lesson plans and teaching students, but they were not completely privileged to the other responsibilities a teacher has during a school day.

Ms. Thomas commented:

The teacher is still totally in charge [during internship], and the teacher pretty much says do this. I think it's really difficult for interns when they get in, they don't really see all the other stuff. I think that's one of the reasons there is such a decline [in the teaching profession]. I was talking to a brand new teacher yesterday who was a fabulous intern, but she said, "I never realized there was so much stuff: management-type stuff, administration, the paperwork, the parent contacts, behavior contracts, professional learning groups. You know, just all the other stuff." I think that's one of the reasons there's drop out [in the teaching profession]. It's not the teaching, it's the other, and how you manage all of the other stuff.

The teachers also felt that the 10 consecutive teaching days, required for all interns, needed to be at the end of the semester, so that the interns were more prepared and competent when they started teaching on their own. The interns kept trying to start it earlier and earlier. They knew if they missed two days during this time they would have to start it over, so they wanted to have plenty of time in the semester to start over if it was needed. Ms. Thomas remarked:

I kept saying, "I promise you're going to be okay." But [my intern] wanted everything to be right then. Some of the teachers, in my opinion, they [interns] did their total teach way too early. They had not had [time to be comfortable in the classroom]. Some of them were doing their total teach like the beginning of February. They were doing it so early I didn't think that they had had time [to know the class]. I don't think they know the kids well enough that early. I understand they want to get it over with and all that sort of thing. But I just heard the teachers say they had done three full teaching days, I mean three full days, and then they were doing [10] total teaching. They were so afraid they weren't going to get it in. Probably if you miss a day you are going to have to start again, or if you miss two days. I just think it would be a better experience for them. That they are seen more as a co-teacher. You know and they're going to get their 10 days in. They're going to get them in. (laughing) I promise you're going to get them in. You will. They would have had more confidence and more experience, because really you want them to know the kids when they are in their 10 days.

The teachers also felt the interns need to understand that teaching is not punching a time clock during school hours. Teachers were not just at school during contract hours, and they were taking quite a bit of work home in the evenings. Ms. Thomas shared:

I think if they're doing a good job they shouldn't be going home at 3:00 and being finished. To me that's a disservice to the intern, because that's not what it's really going to be like. You know. That's not. That's another reason [why teachers] they could be dropping out, because they don't understand how much time you have to put into it.

Quality of internship. All of those interviewed felt that the quality of the internship was a major factor in the strengths and weaknesses, level of preparedness, and competency of an intern at the end of his or her internship.

Alice, an alternative intern, felt so strong about the importance of observing strong quality teaching that she fought for a high quality internship placement. Alice revealed:

I do think, seeing good and bad teachers has really helped me. I've learned what not to do. Although I wish I would've seen more good teachers. So I feel like it's probably a combination. We had to fight really hard to get our good teachers' school placements. There were four of us that kind of put our heads together and did not give up.

Tracy, a traditional intern, also realized the importance of having high-quality field experiences. She contributed:

I had two amazing experiences from my three-day practicum and my internship [in elementary schools in a preferred school system]. The preferred school system is just fabulous. I got to see team work at its finest. That third grade team wasn't there just for themselves, they were there for that whole entire third grade. Each teacher was for each student. It wasn't for your classroom. It was for each student, and they were there for me. All of them you know. It wasn't just my internship teacher. That was an amazing

experience. I've heard some horror stories, and I'm thankful that I really did [have this experience].

Interviewer Follow Up Question: "So you think that you really benefited from being in a good situation versus being in a bad situation in learning what you should do?"

Tracy replied:

Yes, my first practicum was kind of that situation. That was the first time I was in the classroom, a rural county school. It wasn't terrible by any means. I mean it really wasn't, but there just wasn't any classroom management and just a kind of laid back atmosphere. So I got to see that the first time. Then I guess I kind of had my next experiences to compare. I had a just really well rounded experience... I was in an inclusion classroom, too. But even with all that, as you walked into your internship, you still felt a little overwhelmed, and that's normal. I mean that's the beauty of teaching, is that it is. Students aren't cookie cutters. Classes aren't cookie cutters. You could come up with this set of rules and next year, you better be ready, it better be laminated, be ready to erase it, because it may not work the next year. It's just not going to happen. Thank you to my internship cooperating teacher.

The teachers stressed the importance of having the teacher candidates placed in quality teaching situations with competent cooperating teachers, for their internships. Ms. Thomas commented:

Unfortunately, I think sometimes interns get really good teachers, and sometimes interns have really bad experiences. I think that is really sad too. I don't know how you prevent that, but I know that a couple of the ones [teacher candidates] that I've had in the past

have come down and they were like, “It’s not been good.” They need to see some bad classrooms. I mean they need to see, “This is not what I want to do. This is not how I want to do it.” I don’t know how the university could help assure [interns are placed in good classroom situations]. I know not everybody can do it [be a high quality cooperative teacher]. In our school, I know some of my interns have been like, “Do not put another intern in that crazy woman’s room.” Sometimes there’s personality conflicts. Sometimes there are, but I do think it’s the role of the cooperating teacher to be a co-teacher. You know when we [interviewer and interviewee] were going through [our internships], it was teacher vacation [for the cooperative teacher when she had an intern]. I’m scared that some of that still goes on, and that saddens me for the interns.

Ms. Pin, a principal interviewed, commented that it was very important to her to put her interns with cooperating teachers who were organized, efficient, and had time management skills. She said it was imperative that the interns learned the importance of simple things, such as numbering papers in alphabetical order, so it is easier to record data in the computer. She continued that they needed to know the little tedious things that deal with everyday classroom organization, such as having a file for every child, and knowing that students and parents cannot grade and file papers. They all needed experience in the logistics of teaching. Having more classroom experience during teacher preparation, with strong and organized teachers, should have helped the interns with classroom management. Ms. Pin shared:

It’s very important for me to put all interns with organized, efficient timed teachers. If they don’t have that, then they’ve got to learn those skills from somebody. If they don’t get placed with somebody within that long period [classroom labs or practicums], you

better make sure they get it during one of the nine weeks [internships], so they can understand the importance of simple things. Like numbering the papers so that you can easily put them in alphabetical order, so that you can just go down on the computer [when inputting grades]. You know just the little tedious things that are day-to-day organization things. Having a file for each kid. Knowing that you can't let parents access those files. Knowing that you can't let parents grade papers. Knowing that you can't let children file papers. Just the logistical kinds of things of teaching is what they've all got to have more practice with [in the classroom].

Intern Seminar. Intern Seminar was a class for interns during their internship where they came together to discuss issues and concerns or participate in professional development. The interns felt that the Intern Seminar helped them with their level of preparedness.

Anna, an alternative intern, liked the class they had during Internship that met several Fridays at the university. This was an opportunity for them to share their experiences with other interns, and visit with active classroom teachers, who were guest speakers and would share their classroom words of wisdom. Anna explained:

In our internship, there's a developmental [class], every so many days, [that] we go to [at] the university. So many Fridays we've had these. They've been fabulous. We've talked to teachers that are actually in the classroom, who gave us tips.

Intern clusters. The traditional interns also wished there could be more than two interns at each school. They wished that they could have peers they could talk to and share experiences. Someone else who was in their position and knew their school community.

Tina commented:

So there were two interns at our school. I know it's hard with all this, but I think it would be almost more beneficial, if there was maybe another one or two. Maybe we could all meet together like once every two weeks, and maybe just talk.

Tina continued:

There was one other [intern] there with me, and we loved talking about you know 'this happened in my class today', and we were in totally opposite grades so it was kind of cool. Even one [intern] in like another grade would've helped us out, just like talking about [our experiences]. You know whether it be after the faculty meetings, when we would say, "What do you think about this?" We were able to discuss a lot. I think it'd be beneficial to have almost a small group of three or four, in a school. It was a great experience.

Previous Experience. The code family of Previous Experiences dealt with teacher candidates and their education, business opportunities, and time spent working with children before their internship, along with the impact this may have on the interns' competence or confidence within the internship classroom. The Previous Experience code family also included the codes of Intern Background and Previous Degrees before internship.

All of those who were interviewed felt that previous experiences, either in content knowledge or experiences with children, gave interns competence or confidence in the internship classroom. The interns felt that previous work experience helped with organization skills, administrative duties, and professionalism in the classroom. The teachers felt that previous experience with children helped the interns to be more competent and confident when interacting

with students. The principals felt that previous work experiences help the interns to have higher levels of maturity and professionalism.

The alternative interns felt that their previous degrees and experiences out in the work force have helped them in the internship classroom, due to the fact they now have a keener sense of professionalism and a higher level of maturity, than they did when they earned their undergraduate degree. They have had an opportunity to experience life and they have drawn upon those experiences in the classroom. These alternative interns have had previous careers and now they knew what they want and do not want, to do with their lives. Ashley reflected:

Just having real world experiences, I think helps me coming into a classroom. I think being older and having more maturity helps me coming into a classroom. I really do.

Ashley went on to say:

I think an advantage for me is, I've learned that I would rather work with children than adults (laughing). I would rather work with whiney children than whiney adults.

The alternative interns felt their previous degrees and work experience have definitely helped them in pursuit of a career in education, especially in the areas of professionalism, organization, and administrative paperwork. Anna shared:

My prior background, I think it's helped me in a variety of ways. It's helped me, not so much as with the children, because to me that's just [skills] I feel like I naturally have, but as far as the other aspects of the teaching profession, [such as] the professionalism side of it, the administration, the paperwork, the things that you know that you need [in order] to achieve [in the classroom]. So, I feel like that's definitely helped me for sure.

The alternative interns also felt that previous jobs in education have helped them in their internship classroom. Alice explained:

I had substituted before I started this [internship], and that has helped me some, because I think it's more... it's tougher to sub than it is to be an intern (laughing).

The personal experience of parenting also gave, what the alternative interns felt was, an understanding that helped them with dealing with the children in their internship classroom.

Ashley commented:

To me, I feel like I can relate to the children better because I have children of my own. When my children come home with homework, and what they've done in school and stuff like that [it helped me to know what my students experience at home], it's easier for me to relate to the students that I have in my classroom. I just think it helps me personally that I have children of my own. Now I don't, honestly, think it's an advantage or disadvantage. I just think it helps me personally that I have children of my own.

Since both of her parents were educators, Alice, an alternative intern, felt she had some previous knowledge of teaching that she was able to rely on during her internship. Alice shared:

It's that both my parents are teachers. My mom's a teacher and my dad's a professor.

So I feel like I had some knowledge [of teaching before my internship and it has helped].

Many of the traditional interns had had experiences with children before teacher preparation, including being a camp counselor, Sunday School teacher, sports camp coach, tutor, babysitter, and nanny. This being said, they still felt the time they spent in the classroom with

children during their practicums was what helped them the most during their internship. Tina revealed:

I've worked camps. I've worked things like that, like sports camps, but I've never (pause), I mean I've been around kids, but not, not overly an amount [of time]. The majority of time I've spent with kids during my lifetime has been in this program [teacher preparation].

Terry, a traditional intern, had several experiences with children before teacher preparation which helped her to be confident around children. The fact that she was a math major, before majoring in Elementary Education, seemed to have the greatest impact on her math competency in the internship classroom. Terry explained:

I've been around kids my whole life. I've nannied my whole live, [and I've] been a camp counselor. I've volunteer tutored my freshman and sophomore year when I was a math major, [and] I went and volunteered at a county school after-school program and tutored there. I tutored in high school. I volunteered in elementary schools and in high school. So, I've had lots of experiences with kids.

Terry continued:

I never had any question about math because I had that background. Math was always fun for me and it was always my favorite, but I knew that it's not every kid's favorite. So [during internship] I would try to make the math lessons fun and do hands on stuff and some days we wouldn't even go in the textbook, because math is kind of a textbook based subject, and I didn't want the kids to just sit there and do that. So we would do a

lot of hands-on things so then the kids would be like, “Oh your math’s fun,” and I’m like, “Well you don’t really realize you’re doing math.” So I think having more knowledge there helped because I never had to question my math.

The teachers felt the experience the teacher candidates had working with children before their internship, was what helped to give them confidence when working with their students in the internship classroom. This experience could be before the teacher preparation program, or it could be the experience during the teacher preparation practicums. Ms. Allen commented:

That’s where your confidence, I think is found, after doing it. I think that nothing beats experience. Experience, experience, experience. Classroom management comes with experience. All things fall under experience.

Ms. Andrews spoke of an intern who had worked in an after school-program before being accepted into to the teacher preparation program. Due to her confidence and competence, it was obvious she had been teaching and working with children before her internship.

Ms. Andrews remarked:

She’s worked for some years with the after-school program or something [similar], and she’s really got it. She moves and it’s just so, it seems like she’s been teaching [for some time].

Ms. Andrews had also had an intern who had very little experience with children before and during teacher preparation. It took her longer to get it and be comfortable in the classroom. The intern was in a split internship, so when she finally became comfortable working with the

children, it was time to move to another level. Ms. Andrews was not sure she had enough time to cement her new-found skills.

Ms. Andrews shared:

My intern is having some [difficulty], you know, [it] has had to with this age level. She's been doing so much better, but it has taken some time for her to just come [around]. It takes a little bit longer for her to just get it and just kind of [be] okay. It starts, and now and she's got to leave. Okay, I know what [she] can do, [I'm not sure she has done it enough that she will remember].

The principals felt that the interns who had a previous degree in another field, and had experience in the work-place before entering teacher preparation, came into their internships with a higher level of professionalism and maturity. Ms. Paul stated:

A lot of them have earned that other degree and then they decided they wanted to be a teacher, so they go back to an [alternative teacher preparation program to earn a teaching degree]. They're older and they're more mature. I think that factors in. I'm thinking about one teacher. She did something else in sales and decided she wanted to be a teacher. Went back to the alternative university and [she did well] because of her maturity.

Professionalism. The code family of Professionalism represented the level in which the interns exhibit their educational training through their skills, behavior, and judgment. The code family of Professionalism includes the codes of Maturity, Work Ethic, Eagerness and Enthusiasm, Flexibility, Attitude, Certification, Parenthood, and Age Level.

All of those who were interviewed in this study felt that previous experience in the workplace helped the interns with their professionalism in the classroom. Having parenting skills was also an asset during parent conferences and dealing with parents.

The alternative interns felt that by having an undergraduate degree and experience in the workplace, before pursuing a career in education, had helped them with their organization in the classroom and dealing with administration, because they have had experience in these areas. They also felt it helped to be older and know how to conduct oneself professionally, before becoming an educator. Anna remarked:

My prior background...has helped me...in the professional side of it [education], as far as [working with] the administration, the paperwork, things that you need [in order] to achieve [in the classroom]. So, I feel like that's definitely helped me for sure.

Ashley commented:

Just having real world experience, I think helps me coming into the classroom, and I think being older helps coming into the classroom. [Having] more maturity coming into the classroom [also helps]. I really do [think so].

Ashley continued:

I feel like I know how to dress more professionally. I think I know how to conduct myself more professionally. I don't come in with my bar sticker on my hand that I hear some interns tell me (laughing). You know I don't have my bar bracelet on from the night before, which I hear [has happened] ... I've never seen that myself. I guess just being

more tuned in to the world and having world experiences or life experiences [has helped me during my internship].

The alternative interns felt that being a parent was a significant advantage when working with students in the classroom and with their professionalism when dealing with parents. On the other hand, it was a disadvantage. Having a family and children was a noticeable hardship, when it came to their lab placements and internship in different public schools. Sometimes their lab placements or internships were more than an hour's drive from home, which at times caused problems with child care. Anna shared:

Absolutely. I think it's [being a mother] has definitely helped me [as an intern]. Not just with the children, but it really helped me with the parents, too, as a teacher, because I can relate. I definitely feel like that will help both ways, as the teacher, but [also] as a parent when I am talking with parents. I'm a parent too, so I understand everything that you've got going on besides [this]. So I feel like I can sympathize (laughing).

Alice explained:

So it's difficult [at times being a parent], because a lot of us have families, are married, have kids: to think of driving an hour each morning [commuting to your internship]. I mean that's kind of tough.

The teachers remarked that the interns come into the classroom very eager and enthusiastic ready to do what they need to do. The teachers felt that a majority of the alternative interns have a higher level of professionalism, than what they have experienced with the traditional interns, due to the fact they are older and more mature, and they have had experience

being a professional in the working world. The teachers also felt that interns, in general, have difficulties acting professional in the classroom, when they are dealing with parents and participating in parent conferences. They felt that it all comes with experience. Ms. Andrews stated:

They [interns] do have to learn as they go. Like I said before, sometimes professionalism is [better with the alternative interns]. Yes, sometimes it is. I think its maturity, and it may be other workplaces. They've gotten other experiences from jobs. So they know professionalism. Maybe they [traditional interns] haven't had a job where they've had to be more professional and they had to watch what they wore and how they behaved.

Ms. Thomas revealed:

I think parent conferences [is a weakness]. Doing some mock parent conferences [during teacher preparation] would be beneficial [for the interns]. Role playing and modeling, and that sort of thing would be [helpful], because here you've got a 22-year-old kid who's got to come across professional, but can't come across knowing more than the parent, but being the professional in the situation. That's a hard place to be. They [interns] want to be in charge, and that's an area that I see a lot of new teachers really struggling, because parents will eat them alive. Parents feel threatened by this young person trying to tell them what to do, and then teachers feel threatened by these parents, who are kind of bullying a little bit, and they are kind of bullying each other.

Ms. Thomas continued:

I just see some modeling. How do you handle a kid that is failing and a mom who's crying and saying, "What do I do? What do I do? What do I do?" What do you do to

handle, as a teacher, [a parent] who comes in and is yelling and screaming and pitching a fit? The last thing you need to do is become defensive.

The teachers felt that interns and teachers who had families and children at home could relate to the parents of the students in the classroom more easily, which helped them to be more professional during parent conferences. Ms. Thomas commented:

Absolutely. Absolutely. In several ways [being a parent helps being a teacher]. One: experience, especially [at] my age, and I've raised three kids and I've survived. I've seen it and nothing surprises me. I'm like you and I can take the counsel role. I often take that role. You know in my parent conferences a lot of times I become the counselor. "It's just a kid. This is just part of being a parent. It's going to be okay."

Ms. Thomas continued:

Well, somebody who has never had kids before, I think doesn't understand as much. I think if you've never had kids, you don't understand how hard it is to get homework done, and to a lot of parents, that's not the priority and it shouldn't be. It shouldn't be. If a momma has worked all day long and she's got to get kids to and from [activities] and [if] it's going to cause a bunch of battles, is it worth it? I hear a lot of parents, a lot of teachers who've never had kids and [in] that situation that they don't understand how difficult something [like homework is]. [It] should [only] take five minutes, [but it] could end up taking two hours. Is that really what we want as teachers? It's not worth it, because what we want is a strong parent child bond. I understand and I think it's real easy to do "they should read to their kids 20 minutes every night." I remember going to my daughter's third grade teacher and saying, "You know what, some nights we're not going to read 20 minutes. I'm sorry. We're just not going to do it. We're at the

ballpark. We're doing this. We're doing that, and we're being a family. The child needs to go to bed and I just need to cuddle with her, and she needs some down time." We're not going to [get it done], you know, that was not important.

The principals said the interns needed to realize that professionalism in teaching is not only turning reports in on time, dressing properly, earning respect, and having pride to be a part of the teaching profession. It is also realizing that teachers are held to a higher level of conduct inside and outside the classroom. Ms. Penney remarked:

We stress respect. During my orientation with interns and lab students, I tell them once they enter that classroom they are the teacher. Even though the other teacher is in there, [the interns should] not see themselves as trying to be the buddy with these children.

Ms. Penney continued:

Be professional. I might be an old fuddy-duddy, but I think that they ought to be very professional in how they dress. Children notice, and I have found that children appreciate you dressing for them. I'll have a second grader say, "I like your suit." They notice. It's professionalism. Be proud of being in this profession. Have pride in being a teacher.

Ms. Penney also remarked:

I think, [the interns need] to learn the responsibility of getting things turned in on time. It's a professionalism. "That which so much is asked, so much is expected." A lot is expected, [such as], lesson plans [need to be submitted] on time, because now we post everything. The parents can see [so don't] get behind on your website. There are people always checking.

Ms. Penney also commented that interns needed to learn to be team players when working with their colleagues, along with the skill of being flexible during the school day. Ms. Penney contributed, “Flexibility. Every minute of the day. Absolutely.”

Ms. Pin stated:

[Professionalism in interns...] I don’t know if it’s [due to] maturity. I don’t know if it’s life experiences. I don’t know if it’s because they may have children of their own and know what the expectations are, or if they have a teacher as a parent.

Ms. Pin continued:

You know I laugh and tell our people all the time like, “Don’t let me catch you out drinking it up at one of the local restaurants.” The standards are high. I laughed and told some of our young girls that, they came and they said, “Okay, is it okay for us to go to karaoke night in [a nearby town]”, and I said, “That depends.” (laughing) You know I think that’s important for them to understand. That someone’s always there watching, and that their reputation means something the minute they walk out the door. It’s a small town. I’ll give you a perfect example. A girl had done her lab work here, and months, months, months later, she was sloshed at a restaurant I was attending, and I thought, “mmm, note to self.” It wasn’t like I was hanging out at [the local bar]. I’m eating at a restaurant that any of our parents would have been at. You know? I wasn’t looking for it. So I do think that comes along with it. There’s a sense of ethics and there’s a sense of responsibility when you join, in my opinion, teaching or counseling. Anywhere that you’re going to influence children that you have to hold yourself personally accountable

when you leave school. To make good choices. To do the right thing. To be a role model, because you are whether you like it or not, and that's what you've signed up for.

Ms. Paul and Ms. Pin felt that alternative interns are usually more professional.

Ms. Paul remarked:

Yes, I think so. [Alternative interns are usually more professional due to] both, maturity and experience. Being out in that professional world, maybe being a little bit more driven because they know what they...they have had more responsibility and [they know] this is really what they want to do.

Ms. Pin revealed:

The strengths that I've seen [in professionalism] is often times [in alternative interns]. Those people are older, and they've had more life experiences. Yes [they are] more mature. All of those things that come with aging. They've just had more life experiences they can bring to the table. Often times they have more buy in, because of their age with their colleagues, with parents. It's a big deal. They've come to try some things out. Some people look at it two ways. I prefer to look at it as they've just realized that their passion for children happened a little bit later than maybe they anticipated. Or maybe, they've left a career that wasn't as fulfilling as what they want, and this is to be their mission work or their purpose in life. But I think a lot has to be said for the maturity factor that often comes with it. Traditionally they [alternative interns] have a stronger work ethic.

Ms. Pin continued:

A lot of these people who are coming into the second career, they have been accustomed to working 12 months a year with a vacation of a week or two spread out, and they have been on an eight-to-five job. For teachers, young teachers, to understand that just because your work day is from 7:10-3:10, sometimes it's later. Sometimes its weekends. Most times it is, if you're doing a good job. I can't remember a time that I felt like a really great teacher was leaving at 3:10, every day carrying nothing home.

Ms. Paul felt that being a parent usually helped the interns to act more maturely and professionally. Ms. Paul explained:

Maturity plays a huge role [in professionalism]. [Having children helps.] You know they're not looking for a husband, going out on Friday nights and posting it on Facebook, and all this stuff that goes along with being 24-years-old. I mean I get it. It's okay.

School Partnerships. School partnerships were the relationships the university had with the local schools. These partnerships included agreements between the university teacher preparation program and local school districts, to allow teacher candidates and university faculties to spend time in the local classrooms.

The teachers said it was great when the university supervisors for the interns would come out before the internship and meet with the cooperating teachers to go over the process of internship, and then come back several times during the semester to check on the intern and to see how things were progressing, and to answer any questions. Some university supervisors did this and some did not. The teachers commented that they wished the interns' university supervisors would make an appearance in the classroom during their internships. They said that the university supervisor could just pop his or her head in for a few minutes and watch the

interns teach, and then come back later during the internship and do it again, so they could see improvement. The teachers felt the supervisors sign that the interns could graduate, but they didn't know if they could teach or not. How did they write a job reference on someone they don't even know or have not witnessed teaching? The cooperating teachers would have liked the intern, cooperative teacher, and university supervisor to have been more of a team effort. They did mention that cluster teachers did help in these situations. Ms. Andrews remarked:

I know it's hard for them to come and observe, but [if they could] just pop in for [a few minutes] to just observe to see what's really going on. Let me see how she's teaching now, and let's come back and compare. I think it would have been great for them [the interns] to have their supervisor come and actually see who is in this program, and who am I [university supervisor] saying okay, this person gets to graduate. Who is this person? Let me see her teach, actually teach. I know it is hard for them to come out from another city. At least try to see them once at the beginning, and then [later on]. Some places they have to write references and if you don't know them you can't give a reference and say she has done a great job. She could be the worst teacher (laughing) you know? [The supervisor] needs to just [walk in] and say she is doing good, everything going well? Okay. Good.

Ms. Andrew continued:

I do think the traditional interns have someone come, I think. If I'm not mistaken the intern supervisor came out when I had [an intern] a few years ago. She came out and met with me first, and then she met with the intern. Then she came back again, later on. So that works. Just to go over and tell us what we need, or somebody to keep us informed [and to make sure] we've got this and that (laughing). It's a little bit hard to keep up

with everything, but for somebody to just be there for us to say, “Hey, this form I don’t understand.” You know just somebody to kind of give us [a little help].

Classroom Management

According to The Glossary of Education Reform, classroom management refers to the variety of skills and techniques that are used by teachers to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, and on task so that they can be academically productive in the classroom. Classroom management was one of the key themes in the results of this study, and it was mentioned as an area of need for most interns, by the interns, teachers and principals who were interviewed. The Classroom Management code family also included codes of Classroom Behavior, Organization Skills, Time Management, Parent Conferences, Parent Involvement, and Unexpected Challenges.

Classroom Management Course. Classroom Management may have been, but is not always, a part of a teacher preparation curriculum. Sometimes it was a separate university course, where in other places it was integrated among other courses in the curriculum. All interns interviewed felt there was a need to have a Classroom Management course. The alternative interns did not have one and wanted one, whereas the traditional interns had one and felt they needed more.

During the interviews, all three of the alternative interns brought up the fact their teacher preparation program did not include a Classroom Management or a Classroom Behavior class. After making inquiries concerning a Classroom Management course to their instructors, they were told that the interns were expected to learn classroom management along the way through their classroom observations, labs, and practicums. Basically, they were to pick up classroom management skills, whenever they spent time in a classroom. This is when the alternative

interns realized it was going to be imperative that they each have a high-quality cooperative teacher during internship, so they would have the opportunity to observe quality classroom management and teaching skills. This way they would experience the type of classroom management practices they should be implementing into their own future classrooms. Alice commented:

We never had a Classroom Behavior course, and we did ask about it. They say the university just expects you to kind of learn as you go. So, I have learned through good teachers, and that is why I feel it is so important to see good teachers and those good teaching styles, so we know how to implement them later on.

The three traditional interns, who were interviewed, were comfortable with their classroom management during their internship, and two of them thought it was one of their strengths. Although Terry was comfortable with her classroom management skills, she did not consider it a strength, because she realized that most of her questions for her cooperating teacher, during internship, were dealing with the implementation of classroom management. Even though the traditional interns had a classroom management course prior to interning and classroom management was a topic in other teacher preparation courses, Terry felt the interns did not take it seriously enough, until they landed in the classroom and had classroom experiences to relate it to. Terry reflected:

I think classroom management needs to be hit harder. I don't think it was (pause) taken that seriously. Then getting in the classroom you're like, oh my gosh, I really need this.

Tracy, a traditional intern in the second grade, said she took her classroom management class seriously, and she learned from it. Even though her Classroom Management course was

strong, she was not able to completely benefit from it until she had experienced her labs. While in the classroom lab, she was finally able to make the connections of what she had learned to what she was experiencing. Tracy shared:

Our Classroom Management class, I think that was really beneficial. The classes at the university were great about preparing us and teaching us things, but I didn't really make a connection until I got in the classroom. I've had some really great experiences [with classroom management during labs]. I think that helped a lot.

Classroom Experience. The cooperating teachers who were interviewed, felt strongly that classroom management was a need and weakness for the interns, which could have been helped tremendously, if the interns had more classroom experience and interaction with the students, prior to internship. Several teachers indicated that the Classroom Management course was helpful, but the students also needed experience in the classroom to help them with their classroom management confidence. It was also mentioned by the teachers that the interns always tried to find answers to classroom management in textbooks, with no success. The interns thought they had a good idea of what they were supposed to do from the way it read in a book. They knew what to teach and how to teach it, by the book, but when they actually applied what they had book learned, with student interaction, it was different. The teachers felt strongly that the interns needed experience in the classroom to find classroom management strategies that would fit their own personalities. Ms. Allen remarked:

Experience, experience, experience [is what the interns need]. I think that classroom management is the key. If they don't have classroom management they can't teach. When they [the interns] come, I think they're very enthusiastic and are ready to do

what they need to do. I think everybody has a good idea of what they think they're supposed to do. They know what they are supposed to teach and how to teach it, the way it reads in a book. When you actually do it, it's a little different.

For an example, Ms. Allen also talked about interruptions, which she said had thrown many of her interns, especially in first grade. Ms. Allen reported she had seen it many times, when an intern was intense in the middle of a lesson, and then suddenly [the intern] received five questions from members of the class that deviated from the lesson, and commented about a loose tooth or what they had for dinner Sunday night. Ms. Allen said that, in many of these incidences, she observed the intern pulling back and being frustrated, because it was unexpected, and the intern was not prepared to handle this situation. Ms. Allen shared:

It's just the interaction with the student, I think that's what throws them the most. When you are in first grade you're going to get ... [interruptions]. When you are in the content and you're in the middle of teaching it, you're going to get five questions. They're going to deviate and they're going to talk about their loose tooth. So [the intern] needs to pull back and I can see that it could be frustrating. It has been frustrating for some [interns] because they don't expect it, and they are not told, I don't believe, how many interruptions [there will be], and they are going to have to stop [and redirect].

When asked about interns and their classroom management skills, all of the principals agreed this was an area of need and weakness for the interns. However, they all did agree that the interns were improving and getting stronger with their classroom management skills, probably due to some of the interns having had more classroom interaction before internship, but it was still a weakness. Mr. Potts commented:

I think that while it is improved, classroom management is always a thing. I think it's strengthening, [but] I still think most supervisors [and] most cooperating teachers would say it's still a weakness.

Classroom Instruction. The teachers were concerned that the interns were naïve about all of the components of classroom instruction, whereas the interns did not mention or were not aware of any concerns with the different instructional stages a teacher needed to address, when teaching a concept to the class. The traditional interns did bring up the fact they had wished they had taught subsequent lessons in a unit during their methods classroom labs, instead of individual lessons on different concepts. They felt they should have had experience with the continuity of lessons on one topic. The principals interviewed did not mention any concerns about interns and classroom instruction.

One of the teachers interviewed, Ms. Allen, mentioned that teaching a lesson was not just teaching a lesson and grading papers, like many interns assumed. The interns didn't realize all of the steps that follow the introduction of a lesson. Frequently, her interns taught a lesson and felt confident everyone understood the concept, which in reality was seldom the situation. The interns followed the lesson with a corresponding assignment, and when they gave the directions for the assignment, they were shocked that they were interrupted several times, by requests to repeat the instructions, usually multiple times from a handful of confused students. When the assignment was finally completed and papers were graded, it was obvious, much to the intern's surprise, that only a third of the class understood the concept well enough to apply it when needed. So therefore, a reteach of the concept at different levels of ability was required. Then at the end of the day, when the daily papers went home, parents jumped in at that point, by calling, emailing, sending notes for conferences, and wanting to know why their student received a low

grade on the lesson that was taught. When the intern communicated with the parents, the parents wanted to know why the intern had not taught the concept a different way, or why the concept was not taught the way they were taught. All of this was unexpected for the interns, and it was hard for them to navigate these waters, without experience and classroom interaction, which would have helped to give the interns confidence in these situations. Ms. Allen stated:

The distractions, [the students] are going to ask [the intern], even though the intern has told them the instructions, they're still going to come up five times and ask the intern [what to do], and [she is] going to [repeat the instructions]. Once they grade the papers they are going to have to go over and reteach. Someone doesn't get it, and the intern thinks they had gotten it. Then they are going to have the parents that are going to jump in at that point. [The student] had a bad grade and [the parents] are wondering why [the intern] did not teach it a different way or the way that the parents had learned it. So I think all of those things are just unexpected for some of the interns and it's difficult to navigate those waters. That is where their confidence I think is found after doing it. I think nothing beats experience.

Organizational Skills/Time Management. Interns, teachers, and principals, who were interviewed, felt that organizational skills in the classroom and classroom time management were both weaknesses for interns. It was implied that all the interns would benefit from more classroom experience in these areas, along with professional development. The principals also mentioned that they felt it was important to put their interns with cooperating teachers who had strong organizational skills.

Tina, a traditional intern who was interviewed, added that she could have used help with her classroom organizational skills and time management. During her internship, she was

amazed at all the different responsibilities a teacher had in the classroom. It was so much more than classroom management procedures and grading papers. Her cooperating teacher dealt with lunches, last-minute changes in dismissal, constant flexible scheduling due to school-wide activities, loose teeth, field trip money, etc. It seemed like every day, Tina was surprised with another new and unique teacher task that needed attention. Tina remarked:

One thing that I noticed pretty early was my organization skills, once I was in the classroom. I didn't realize how many duties; how many things a teacher actually has to do. That was really eye opening to me once I was learning through internship. Each week I learned something new that my teacher did, that I didn't really realize before.

Ms. Thomas, a third grade teacher interviewed, contributed that she recently talked with a first-year teacher who had been a fabulous intern, but now she was overwhelmed with all the unexpected little things that were teacher responsibilities, and every day she felt like she was drowning. Even though she co-taught with her cooperative teacher during internship, her cooperative teacher was still in charge, so she did not feel the responsibility for all of the little things that went on during the school day. Unfortunately, Ms. Thomas went on to say she has observed this drowning feeling, in new teachers, lasting for three to five years before they can find, through trial and error, a management system that would work for them and help them be more efficient. She added that this might be one of the reasons why teacher retention was so low during the first few years of an educator's career. Ms. Thomas shared:

The teacher is still totally in charge [during internship] and the teacher pretty much says do this. I think it's really difficult for interns when they get in; they don't really see all the other stuff. I think that's one of the reasons there is such a decline [in the teaching

profession]. I was talking to a brand new teacher yesterday who was a fabulous intern, but she said, “I never realized there was so much management type stuff: administration, the paper work, the parent contacts, behavior contracts, professional learning groups. You know, just all the other stuff.” I think that’s one of the reasons there’s drop out [in the teaching profession]. It’s not the teaching. It’s the other and how you manage all of the other stuff.

Ms. Penny, an elementary principal, commented that there was a great deal expected of interns and first-year teachers in the classroom, and they were doing better with all of the responsibilities and organizational skills. For example, lesson plans needed to be submitted on time, websites needed to be constantly updated, and they knew that principals and parents, were constantly checking to make sure that this was done. The interns and first-year teachers felt the pressure. Ms. Penney commented:

A lot of it is expected, [such as] lesson plans on time, websites updated, because now we post everything and parents can see when you get behind on your website. There are people always checking.

Ms. Paul, a principal at a high-ranking elementary school, had similar thoughts as Ms. Penny and Ms. Pin, other elementary school principals. She also stressed the importance of learning organizational skills, which included a substitute folder. She asked what other profession required a person to prepare for the person who took their place while they were absent. She had tried to arrange for coverage for interns and first-year teachers, so they could attend one hour of professional development at the end of a school day before contract time ends. This meant they needed to have written detailed lesson plans for the hour, written dismissal

procedures, written discipline plans, and they needed to make sure notes were included, such as “Jimmy” freaks out every day at 1:45, and this is how to handle it. If a substitute folder had not been created, most of them begged to stay in the classroom, so they didn’t have to take three hours to prepare for the one hour of professional development. Ms. Paul also hinted that classroom management may not just be a need in the teacher preparation program, but it may be a result of asking too much of teachers who are already doing the best they can. Ms. Paul explained:

The other problem is what other profession do you have, that prepares for the person that’s going to be taking your place while you’re gone? When you’re looking at your teachers leaving at 1:30, they’re saying, “All right I’ve got to have lesson plans. I’ve got to write down my dismissal procedures and everything for this teacher that is going to come in and take over for me while I’m gone for an hour.” It’s almost easier [for the new teachers and interns] to say, “Just let me stay. It’s going to take me two or three hours to prepare for what, to make sure I’ve got everything down, because I didn’t do that substitute folder as well as I thought I did.” [Teachers and interns will say,] “I need a reminder that little Jimmy freaks out every day at 1:45.” I believe that’s really what it’s all about. It’s not like a [need] in our preparation programs. I really don’t think that. I think we’re [already] busting it.

Time management was another area of classroom management, where Tina stated she could have used help. She commented that when she started doing her full days of teaching in her internship, she was only getting through half of her lessons, when it was time for transition to the next activity. Tina said that several times, she just wanted to stay with the kids until they understood the concept, but she realized there were not enough minutes in the day to do that.

She remarked that her cooperating teacher had to keep reminding her that it was okay to run out of time. There was always tomorrow, or maybe a few minutes here or there at the end of the day. Tina said she felt that she did not have an opportunity to practice managing her time with full lessons during her lab experiences, so time management was definitely one of her needs. Tina revealed:

This might be hard to give help in, but time management as far as when teaching the full days [was a need]. Once I got into my 10 full days, I was better at it. I still wasn't perfect, but those first full days, that I taught, I would catch myself, you know, time to go to specials [art, music, etc.] and I'm not really through my lesson at all. Especially in the morning during language arts, because we'll get into reading groups. If you have a reading group, than you just want to stay with them until they get it, and you just want them to really get the most out of this reading group, but you can't stay with every reading group for 30-40 minutes. You have to adjust, but then sometimes you run out of time. I had to realize, and my teacher told me this as well, it's okay if you run out of time. We have tomorrow and there's time at the end of the day, where you can pull kids if you need to. [So,] I would think that organization [skills] and time management for sure [are needs].

Teaching vs. Nurturing. Teaching versus nurturing or mothering, dealt with situations when interns and new teachers struggled with the thin line that sometimes appeared between teaching a student and dealing with student tears. The educator had to decide what was best for the student, and when it was appropriate to relax structure. The interns voiced teaching versus mothering was a weakness.

When interning in a first grade classroom, Tina commented that she had a tendency of wanting to coddle the children all of the time. Since Tina already had strong classroom management skills when she entered her internship, she was now free to concentrate on how to be a teacher, who had to balance between being an educator and a nurturer for her students. By the last two weeks of her internship, she felt that she had acquired a good balance, between mother hen and instructor. This gave Tina her confidence in being able to handle her own classroom in the future. Tina reflected:

Once I got into my internship, I felt like I was actually connected to the first graders well. A lot better than I thought I would. It's hard because you want to hug them every day. You want to be their best friend, but you are the teacher. It's hard to explain. It is the fine line. I had to learn that very in between.

Ms. Allen mentioned that her interns did not want to hurt a first grader's feelings. The students were sweet, they took things personally, and they were going to cry. Interns needed to be firm at times, and they needed to be consistent for the benefit of the student. Experience in the classroom also helped the teacher candidates to be competent when handling these situations.

Ms. Allen explained:

And I know that no one wants to hurt someone's feelings, but sometimes the interns have to, especially in the younger grades. They [students] are so sweet, and they take it personally, and they are going to cry, [the interns] have to deal with this. I think a lot of people have trouble with it.

Classroom Community. A classroom community was where the students had a sense of belonging and shared a common purpose, goals, and values with the other members of the class.

It was where the students felt safe and accepted, knew the procedures, and they knew what was expected of them. All interns, teachers, and principals agreed that classroom community building was a weakness for all interns. This was mainly due to the fact, it was a skill that needed to be observed and witnessed in the classroom, which was not available for lab students or interns due to the university and public school calendars.

Terry, a traditional intern in first grade, felt she struggled a bit with classroom community building. Her internship started after the students had already learned classroom procedures, so she was not sure how to implement that process. She felt that she would have been more competent and confident in classroom management, if she would have been able to witness the implementation process of a classroom community. Terry shared:

I haven't seen a first day of school since I was in elementary school. Even for practicum we started you know a month and a half into school [year]. So I think being able to see the first two weeks of school when they implement all of that would be really beneficial, because I felt like a lot of the questions I asked my internship teacher were, "Okay, when you first started your behavior management plan, how did you teach it?" I don't even know how to start it, or implement it.

Terry continued:

How do you teach them this is the bathroom sign and this is the water sign, and you know, nobody goes to the pencil sharpener, [because] you only sharpen your pencils in the morning? How [do you teach them how] to start centers and teach them how to rotate? Like that's such a foreign concept to them, but for us it's just like, "Oh you know to do it. When the timer goes off you rotate." That's where they were when I came in

the classroom. They knew exactly what they were supposed to do, when they were supposed to do it, but I personally would not know how to begin teaching that. The kids know the routines. They know where to stop in the hallways, when going to lunch or walking across the school. How do you first teach that? Harry Wong says you have to have it done by the end of the second week. Well, I don't even know what the first two weeks look like. So I feel like the majority of my questions I asked my teacher through the semester were [how to teach procedures].

Ms. Thomas commented that it would be extremely beneficial if interns could experience how to teach community in a classroom. The interns needed to know how to teach routines, rules, lunch count, classroom jobs, etc. The teacher candidates needed to experience training students to be responsible citizens of the class. Ms. Thomas asked if there was any way interns could be in the classroom at the beginning of the school year, so they would have an opportunity to learn these skills. Ms. Thomas explained:

If they could.... I think that it would be so beneficial [for the interns], just to see how do you teach community? How do you teach routines? How do you teach the rules? How do you teach a kid how to do the lunch count? If you've got 20, I've got 18, jobs. How do I train [students], and they change [jobs] every week? How do you train kids to do that? Because you think, surely they are going to know. Well it's going to be 18 weeks before one child gets to do this job, and they're going to have forgotten my training by then.

Ms. Train, a first grade teacher in a highly rated school system, remarked that she would rather have her interns during fall semester instead of spring semester, due to classroom community building. She said her spring interns came into her first grade classroom saying,

“This is great.” The students were independent workers and were thinking freely for themselves. The first graders still needed guidance and instruction, but they knew what to do and how to do it. The interns never witnessed them getting from “point A”, where the students were at the beginning of the year, to “point D”, which is where they were when the intern entered the classroom in January. The intern had missed a huge part of the instruction. Ms. Train commented:

They’ve missed a huge piece of how it all came to be. It’s automatic, they’re coming in and looking at it going, “Oh this is great. They’re independent workers. They can think freely for themselves.” Yes, you still have to guide and instruct and all of that’s going on non-stop, but they didn’t see what it took to get from point “A” now to point “D”, which is where we are when they come in, if that makes sense. They missed a huge part of that instruction. They’re coming into something that’s already established for a class.

Ms. Pin, an elementary principal, felt strongly that interns needed to be in the classroom at the beginning of the school year, and they needed to be very consistent right from the beginning. Classroom communities and procedures needed to be taught, and the classroom tone needed to be set, during the first two weeks of school. The interns would not have a more attuned group of students than they will have those first two weeks. Also, during classroom community building was when their classroom management reputation would be set. Ms. Pin reflected:

I think the important thing is being very consistent right up front. We always try to impose the importance of that first two weeks like the Harry Wong book, and training children to be exactly what you want them to be. You’re not going to have a more attune

group than those first two weeks. So train them in the procedural kinds of things and set the tone, because after a certain period, your reputation is set.

Classroom Behavior. The principals and teachers all agreed that classroom management and classroom behavior were a weakness for interns and were difficult areas to handle with little experience in the classroom. They felt that interns wanted to go to textbooks to learn how to handle classroom behavior situations, and they soon discovered what they were looking for was not in a book. The principals and teachers were also saying the interns needed experience in the classroom in order to find a classroom behavior system that worked for their personal teaching style, while still being consistent and fair.

With behavior, the principals have noticed, that the interns were trying more positive techniques than negative, and it was working for them. Ms. Penney added that she had found interns being frustrated when they did find a behavior plan that worked, but then it only worked for six weeks, due to the class becoming bored with it. Another frustration appeared when an intern found a behavior plan that worked with one group of students. She thought she had finally found her own successful classroom behavior strategy. The intern was excited and implemented it with a different class of students, and it bombed. The lesson learned was that all behavior plans did not work with all students. Ms. Penney remarked:

You've got to find what works for you, but it [needs to] be consistent and fair, and next year it might not work with that group of children. Flexibility every minute of the day.

Ms. Pin, another principal interviewed, agreed with Ms. Penny, and said that the same classroom management and behavior plans were not going to work with every class. She added that just because the token system worked this year does not mean it will work next year, or that

it will work with every student. Ms. Pin went on to say that it was important the interns be very consistent right from the beginning, and she tried to impose, with her teachers, the importance of the first two weeks, and referred to the Harry Wong books on classroom management.

Classroom communities and procedures needed to be taught, and the classroom tone needed to be set, during the first two weeks of school. The interns will not have a more attuned group of students than they had those first two weeks. Mrs. Pin commented:

The fun thing about classroom management is that it's not just what's going to work for them, but whatever class they're given at the time. Like your token system might work for one class one year, but it may not work the next year, and it may not work for every student.

Parent Conferences. The teachers all agreed that parent conferences were a weakness for interns and a challenge for new teachers. During the conferences, the interns needed to feel competent and be professional, while building a rapport with parents, which was hard to do without experience.

Ms. Thomas added that classroom management was hard to teach without having experience in the classroom. She said watching classroom situations on videos and discussing the issues during teacher preparation may be helpful. She also added having mock parent conferences during teacher preparation would be extremely useful. She said it was difficult for her 22-year-old interns to come across looking professional during parent teacher conferences.

Ms. Thomas shared:

I think management is just a practice thing. It's hard for the university to train [in classroom management]. I don't know, if you could do more situational things, maybe

watching videos in the classroom. Watching videos and [asking] how would you handle it? I think parent conferences and teaching [situations would be beneficial in videos]. Doing some mock parent conferences with role playing and modeling, and that sort of thing would be [helpful]. Because here you've got a 22-year-old kid who [needs] to come across professional, but can't come across knowing more than the parent, but [still] being the professional in the situation, and that's a hard place to be.

Meeting the Needs of the Elementary Student

Meeting Student Needs included the topics, issues, and resources interns experienced when meeting the needs of their students in the classroom.

Special Education. In this study, comments about the code family of Special Education, the practice of educating students with special needs, also included comments concerning the codes of Inclusion Classes, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and Gifted Education.

All interns, teachers, and principals, who were interviewed, felt that Special Education was a weakness for the interns in the classroom, and there was a definite need for the teacher candidates to have more knowledge and instruction in the area of Special Education. Even though interns from both programs had a Special Education course included in their university coursework, all of the interns felt unprepared and not competent when working with students of special needs during their internship.

The alternative interns had a Special Education course online, but they still felt they needed more preparation in this area before going into the classroom. The online course consisted of readings and answering questions for a grade. However, they wished there had been an opportunity to interact with an instructor on the different issues. Alice commented:

At the middle school, for example, I had an inclusion class co-teaching with the Special Ed. teacher. She [cooperating teacher] was great, but she had a child on a first grade reading level, a sixth grader [on grade level], and a child on a 12th grade reading level in the same class. I had a need to know. I wish my program would have taught me how to find that middle ground. How can I meet the needs of both of them in the same class period, when I have 50 minutes? So I feel like I didn't really get a good background.

The alternative interns agreed, and they wished the teacher preparation program had taught strategies to use with students with special needs. Once they were in the internship classroom, they learned quickly that all strategies do not work with all students.

Fortunately, the alternative interns were lucky to have 20 hours of lab with their Special Education course, where they would be able to observe the Special Education teacher working with a small student group or one-on-one with a student. Unfortunately, in their situations, the Special Education teacher was not working with students with IEPs, during most of their scheduled observation time. However, they did observe her escorting students with special needs to another room, so they could complete an exam in less distracting surroundings. When the interns did observe the Special Education teacher with students, she was not instructing, but monitoring the students taking a test. Ashley added:

It was a county school, and she [the Special Education teacher] would just kind of help a class, but help the whole class. This may be the norm. She would have people come in and take a test with her, but I didn't really see her help a lot. You know? If somebody needed to come and take a test with a quiet surrounding or something like that, they would come in there, and they would take a test, and she would walk them back. A lot of the day she wouldn't have anybody. You know, because the teacher may say no

they don't need to come today. So, I'm sitting there like, okay.

The traditional interns interviewed had a Special Education course during their teacher preparation, but they reluctantly wished it was more effective. The interns learned about the different disabilities, but did not learn any strategies to use in the classroom, which they could have used during internship. Tina reflected:

I know, not every intern was in an inclusion class [during internship]. Not every intern was able to interact with kids' with IEPs every day. Luckily, I am so very thankful that I was, because I now know how to deal with that, and how to adjust and accommodate. I had to accommodate almost every lesson which was awesome, because if I had that in my first year teaching, and [if] I didn't have this inclusion class [during internship], I don't know how I would handle it. I'm not sure. I'm just thinking back, if I didn't have that, I would want to be more prepared. Maybe the Special Education class, either another one or this one, could be more situational, teaching strategies and dealing with different types [of disabilities].

The traditional interns also wished their Special Education course had been more specific and targeted elementary education, like their courses taught during the teacher preparation cohort. Terry suggested:

I know it's hard to cram it all into the cohort program, but things like Special Education and the reading courses, if they were within your cohort, they could be more direct [to your specific area]. Special Education was just general for any education [major], so I had people in the class who were agriculture education. Well, they're probably not going to deal with IEPs, but we are. So having it more specific and learning

how to write an IEP or things like that [would be helpful]. I don't even know what an IEP looks like. So it [the course] needs to be more direct to your focus in education.

Looking back, the traditional interns wished the Special Education course had included strategies to use with different disabilities. They felt that all classes have students with special needs, who did not qualify for an IEP or to be served by the Special Education program. As a teacher, they will be required to meet the needs of these students as well, and they did not feel prepared to do that. Tracy contributed:

In my three-day practicum, I was in an inclusion classroom and I was, I felt, extremely ill prepared for that. Extremely. Well, we only had the one Special Education class. I'll be real honest, mine was not very helpful. I feel like there should be more emphasis put on that, because you will have students who don't qualify for an IEP, but come awful close. You'll need to be able to handle that, because I struggle with that in mine. I had a fabulous teacher. Thank the Lord. She was able to help me through that, but when your focus is on the student, and that's where I tried to make mine, I'm sitting here going, "I can't. I'm not helping this child. What do I need to do? How can I help this child?", and I didn't know what to do. We need more strategies, even for dyslexia; just to learn more ways to help. [A guest speaker, during their intern seminar, gave the interns strategies to use when working with students who were dyslexic. Tracy would like more of those type strategies].

The traditional interns recommended that the Special Education course be taught with a lab or during the two or three day practicums in the elementary education classroom. They relayed that they did not understand the importance or completely comprehend what was being

taught in the Special Education class, until they were able to relate it to what they were observing in the classroom. Tracy went on to say:

I took the Special Education course before I even got into the program. I wasn't making connections. I wasn't in the classroom. I know we had to look at different IEPs in that class, but I didn't know what they meant. Our professors encouraged us to talk to our [classroom] teachers about it, but they're busy, and you know it's hard to sit down and take that time.

All four teachers interviewed felt the interns had a weakness and a definite need, when dealing with students with special needs, and most of it was due to lack of experience and knowledge. The teachers felt it might be helpful for the interns to watch Special Education classroom videos, during their lectures on campus. These viewings could be followed by class discussions on how to handle each situation. Ms. Thomas remarked:

You can read about it, you can talk about it, but until you can get into it and really experience it [is when you will make a connection]. Some [classroom] videos and modeling may be [helpful for the interns]. I think [it's best] when you put them into a situation and say that this is a situation we saw and how would you handle it?

The teachers also felt that it was very hard for the interns to differentiate and level lessons for the students with special needs. Ms. Thomas commented:

I do think it's scary and overwhelming for interns when they get into a classroom and they realize that they may have an autistic child in there, or they may have a child that has some really serious behavior issues, because, I would say 75 percent of us do.

There's going to be one child who is going to take up 60 percent of your time. How do you manage that? The pulling in and out is really hard for the kids [in the classroom], but as far as the interns, leveling lessons I think is very hard for them.

The teachers contributed that when there was a need, the interns did well collaborating with other classroom teachers and resource teachers, and it was one of their strengths. When an intern was in an inclusion class, there was a considerable amount to learn about individual students in a condensed amount of time. There were also several different teaching styles and personalities on the support team during collaboration, and the interns had jumped in and done well in these situations. Ms. Train shared:

Anytime that I've had, I don't want to say issues, or just comments or concerns and say this is an area that I've noticed that we need to focus on. This is something that we need to transfer our attention to, or this needs to come more to the forefront instead of being kind of pushed to the wayside. I think it was handled pretty well [by the interns].

All of the principals interviewed were unanimous concerning the weakness and great need of interns to have more instruction and experience in the area of Special Education. They emphasized that Special Education in teacher preparation was extremely important and went on to explain that the days of Special Education have changed. The regular education teacher was now the Special Education teacher, and the Special Education teacher had become the case manager and consultant. Students with IEPs were spending more and more time in the regular education classroom. The regular education teachers needed to be familiar with the IEPs, and they needed to make sure they were documenting every step as they work toward the IEP goals and benchmarks. The classroom teachers had taken on the responsibilities of the special

education needs, because they were the teacher, and they were ultimately responsible for student learning. Therefore, the interns needed to make sure they were planning for these students. Ms. Penney reflected:

I already know of several autistic children we're getting this year. They're going to be in the classrooms. Now some [not all] will have aides, but still it's the yelling out, the distractions that are going on in that room. I don't care how devoted you are to every child in that classroom and meeting their needs. It is you, just having to try to make one size fit all as a teacher and it's not working.

Ms. Penney continued:

Then as an administrator, I see the complaints that come to me from the parents of the children who are in the classroom with all of these diverse needs feeling like their children's needs aren't being met, because of the time that the classroom teacher is having to spend with the high-maintenance children. [All of this is difficult for interns to handle with no knowledge or experience in Special Education.]

It was also mentioned, among the principals, that interns needed to know strategies to use with students with different disabilities. Not all students who exhibited special needs characteristics qualified for the Special Education services, and their needs also had to be met by the classroom teacher and intern, with no assistance from the Special Education teacher. The interns needed to know how to differentiate for all their students in the classroom, and needed to be able to implement these differentiation strategies in the classroom. Mr. Potts remembered:

We interviewed the other day for a teaching position and the people [applicants] would use the buzz words they all use. One person [from the interview panel] asked “What would you do for this child? This child is struggling.” [The applicant replied] “Well. I would differentiate.” Okay. You got the right word, in the right context, but I don’t know what you would do. Later on she said, “I would differentiate, with pulling something off the computer.” That is all good and well but that is not really teaching.

The principals added that RTI, Response to Intervention, had brought a whole new component to Special Education, and it would have benefited the interns if they had added resources about RTI, to their personal professional libraries. Ms. Pin contributed:

Whether it is an ADD child, an ADHD child, or some of the specific disabilities that do not require an IEP, it can only help the interns [in these situations] to be aware of this basic knowledge. The day will come when these interns are new teachers, and they are sitting in a conference with a parent who says, “We are not doing medicine.”, and the child is falling on the floor, yelling out, and having behavior issues. They will then appreciate these resources.

The principals also suggested that the interns have several semesters of different layers of Special Education. Not only did they needed to know how to identify the issues, and what strategies they needed to use in each situation, they also needed to know the protocols and procedures when dealing with students with special needs, which seemed to be constantly changing. The principals felt the interns had a weakness and were lacking in the knowledge of what they needed to know about legal issues, and what could and could not be said during an IEP meeting. Ms. Paul shared:

I think [the interns should see] the process through from the MET to the actual writing of the IEP. I think that teachers need to know scenarios about legal issues and meeting with these attorneys, and they need to know what to say and what not to say in an IEP meeting. There are times [during an IEP meeting] when a teacher will say something [and make a commitment], I will have to say [as an administrator], “Well actually we’re going to try to work on that”. Then later I’ll have to say [to the teacher], “Don’t ever say “we will have [unless you are positive we can do it], or we can look into that.” No we’re not going to look into that. We don’t assign a private aid to anybody. Don’t ever tell a parent that, and they’re going to say, “Oh I didn’t know, because little Jimmy has one.” Well Jimmy’s mother took him to court and won. That’s why she’s got the aid. That’s why we’re not doing that anymore.

The principals continued and said that the interns not only needed knowledge concerning Special Education, they also needed to have experience with it in the classroom. They needed a frame of reference to be able to relate what they were learning in their Special Education courses to the needs of their students with special needs. Ms. Paul commented:

But there needs to be more than just giving them [interns] information. [Such as] this is what an IEP looks like, because they’re getting all this stuff. It’s no different than anything else. You can tell me there is oil in a car, but if you don’t take me out there and make me get up under that car and change that oil, I am not going to be able to tell you about the oil. Now I can, if you ask me later, “Do you know what an air filter is?” I can say, “Yeah I’ve heard of that.” But that is all.

Gifted Education. The principals also mentioned that Gifted Education, which was under the Special Education umbrella, was another weakness for the interns and was another area where professional development would be beneficial. Some of the principals hosted brown bag lunches with the interns on campus, and invited different teachers to come and talk about their areas of specialty. When they asked the interns what topics they would like to discuss, Gifted Education was frequently on the list. The interns wanted to know what a student who was gifted looked like and how did you served them. Ms. Pin passionately remarked:

That group of children [Gifted] often times is the most neglected of all of the groups, because if we teach to the middle and we re-teach and over teach the disadvantaged, often times there's not enough [time] allotted for those children. They're given extra homework, or read at their desks, or do more of the same. So I think it's critical to keep them engaged and interested and find their passion and let them fly with it. Sometimes as you well know, those are the most challenging ones, because they'll question you and they'll pick and annoy. Keeping them interested and engaged and letting them... they can do so many independent kinds of projects to enhance their creativity, their research skills, and all of the above, and I think they have to have time to work together. I think there's so much to be said for them to be able to engage each other, challenge each other, and question each other. A lot of times we kind of just sit back and watch, because we are not necessarily the gifted ones in the room and may not even understand what they're talking about (laughing).

English Language Learners. All interns who were interviewed reported that they did not receive any English Language Learner instruction during their teacher preparation courses, and they wished they had, especially during their internships. The interns did not feel competent

or prepared when working with their students in the classroom who did not speak English. The teachers and principals, who were interviewed, all agreed that ELL needed to be included in the teacher preparation programs.

The alternative interns shared that there was no instruction concerning English Language Learners presented during their teacher preparation program. They reported that their first experience with English Language Learners was during their internships, and at that time they wished that they had had instruction and experience in this area. Anna stated, “We didn’t really get anything on ELL. Really [we did not]. “

Ashley reflected:

We didn’t have a lot [of instruction] with ELL, or even [instruction for] the lower achieving, [or] maybe the [students with a] learning disability.

The traditional interns were more urgent with their request for help with ELL students. They found themselves in classroom situations where they were clueless on how to proceed, and wished ELL instruction had been included during their teacher preparation. Terry contributed:

I had a student move from Korea into my classroom in the middle of my 10 consecutive days [intern in complete control of class]. I didn’t know what to do. She didn’t know her name because they changed her name when they moved to America. She didn’t know anything. She didn’t speak a word [of English] and she just sat there like playing with things at her desk, and I had to deal with that in the middle of my 10 days. I think just even strategies like how to begin teaching them like, “Hi”, “Please”, “Thank you”, and if you are thrown into an emergency situation how to handle it. I know there are a lot of

situations like this that are going to come up in the classroom that you just have to take and figure out, but I think having been prepared for ELL would have helped.

Tracy added:

The ELL teacher came and spoke with us [during the intern seminar]. The things that she said were so beneficial. I never considered before, when you write to an ELL parent, write it in print. Make sure you use, very Standard English, and if a child's not speaking to you, don't take offense to it. It's a huge adjustment for them.

The teachers interviewed also felt that ELL needed to be included in the teacher preparation programs. Mrs. Allen commented:

I'm the ELL teacher for the grade so all [ELL students] are in here. It was difficult the first few weeks, because I had a student who came on the bus the first day because, of course, his parents don't have a driver's license. He doesn't speak one word of English and I don't speak Chinese. So you know, I felt for this poor child. I greeted him at the front of the school and brought him to my classroom. At that point you [the teacher] have to take away a little bit from everyone else [in the classroom] because he needs more intensive help.

The teachers agreed that it was hard for interns to know what was acceptable and what was not with the English Language Learners, especially when there was a communication barrier. Ms. Train remarked:

To what degree do I know that, yes, they're mastering the skills that I'm introducing, even though I'm doing it three or four different processes [during the lesson]. As a teacher this is difficult [and it's also difficult for interns.]

The principals all agreed that there needed to be ELL instruction in the teacher preparation programs. The number of ELL students in the regular education classroom was on the rise and the classroom teacher was responsible for meeting these students' needs. As administrators, they felt as though they registered English Language Learners and just placed them in a classroom, hoping that the teacher was going to be able to handle this new challenge. The schools did have an ELL teacher as a resource, but that person was usually shared with another school, so her time in the classroom was minimal, and she was often not there to help. The responsibility of this student was ultimately with the classroom teacher. Ms. Penney stated:

Talking about the how difficult [teaching is] and why there's so much burn out now. Schools have changed so much. There are so many demands on these teachers coming in, because we're seeing more IEP students. We're seeing more ELL children. Just the needs in society for our children has increased tremendously over the last 10 years. You know what we do as administrators? We just register these children and put them in classrooms, and of course, you know you do have an ELL teacher, but I share one with another school, and she's not here often. The responsibility is ultimately with the classroom teacher.

The principals also added that all teachers needed, not just the interns, instruction in dealing with ELL students. All the schools were now required to use SDAIE, Special Design Academic Instruction in English, which was instructional strategies to use throughout the year

with ELL students. The classroom teacher was now in charge of the ELL program [in the classroom] and the ELL teacher was there only as a support system. The education, curriculum, and the differentiated instruction for the ELL student was all the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Ms. Paul contributed:

Now we've got SDAIE that's new. The ELL program now is you're in charge, the classroom teacher. The ELL teacher is there just to support you, but really their education, their curriculum, their differentiated instruction, it's all up to you [the classroom teacher]. In most cases when you bring a child to a teacher's door and they don't speak any English, you get, "What am I supposed to do with them?" They're looking at you like, "Oh my gosh" and you're like, "She doesn't speak any English, but she learns. She'll learn quickly." They don't know what to do with [these students] and they've got 18 other kids. You know?

The principals mentioned, that as long as a teacher had the foundations of how to teach a child to read and write, it was possible to help the child, who was ELL, to be successful. Basically, the strategies a teacher used to help an ELL student to read and write were great instructional tools for any student. Ms. Pin commented:

But really the things you do for ELL [students] to teach them to read or to write are great instructional tools for any kid. So as long as they [the interns] have the foundations of how to teach a child to read, how to teach them to write, then they're going to be in great shape. Obviously you're going to use pictures with words when they're younger. That's what you do period. I mean obviously you're going to use pictures with the text when

you're doing your walk and talk pre-reading through the story. So the things that you do to help readers be better are really going to work for ELL children as well.

The principals also contributed that Cultural Sensitivity Training would be beneficial for all teacher candidates. Understanding culture and family background was helpful when working with ELL students and their parents. Mr. Potts suggested:

Our ELL population is going to change. That's another area where having a little bit more exposure to the culture couldn't hurt. A few years ago [our system's] administrators attend sensitivity training. I didn't know that parents [of ELL students], could see things differently. The father could be in position of authority [which means] that I will need to have business cards [when we meet]. Here's my business card and my contact information. You present it just like this and he's going to give you one [too]. You need to look at it, you don't need to put it in your wallet. You need to hold on to it as if it is something you're going to keep.

Data. Data, in the classroom, were the results from assessments that informed the instructor what a student knew and did not know. They also related to the level of instruction at which a student needed to be taught in order to see progress or achievement. Formative assessment was assessing a student's progress during instruction and was collected during the learning process. Summative assessment was assessing what the student learned after instruction. Data taken from summative assessment were usually used to understand which skills a student had mastered or had not yet achieved.

In this study, interns and teachers felt that the interns were not competent or confident in the use of data. The principals proposed that the interns knew how to collect data, but did not know how to use them once they had retrieved them. Using data was a weakness for the interns.

The traditional interns did not possess confidence in the use of data. They felt that they could not interpret test results, nor could they comprehend how to create appropriate intervention plans. They even wished someone had shown them how to read data from standardized testing.

Tracy shared:

I think that's something [data] that I really don't feel like we had a lot of experience with. My internship teacher, she tried to show me several times the different things they used [formative and summative data]. I was like, "Oh, this is great.", but it was just so much to take in. It was kind of overwhelming. So I'd probably say, that's something I was not confident in. Mainly, I didn't really know how to read it, and [I wasn't] able to use the data and come up with a plan. Like how do you do that? How do you use intervention to help those kids? I think that would be really good [to know], because that's kind of where we're at right now, in the classroom.

Tracy continued:

I think that's something every teacher struggles with [data and intervention]. I know I saw [it]. Like I would just look at my intern teacher and go, "When are we going to do this? When are we going to pull them out? How do you do that?"

The teachers felt the interns were not competent or confident in the use of data or in planning interventions. The interns seemed to struggle when trying to interpret test results.

Ms. Train remarked:

Being familiar with your data, and then once you have that data, what do you do with it [was an intern weakness]? What are your next steps, when you're meeting the needs of IEP students, when you're meeting the needs of ELL students, when you're meeting the needs of your [students] at risk? You're looking at a whole different entity now, than where you started, when you put together a lesson plan that said, "Based on this, this is what I am going to teach today." And you're like, "Congratulations, but you've got six that can't do that, so now what are you going to do?" That's hard.

The teachers also pointed out that the interns did not understand the different forms of data. Data were not just test results; they could have also been summarizations from classroom observations. Ms. Andrews stated: "It's [data], and it's not just numbers, but [also] observation."

Ms. Thomas came from a different perspective and said that the interns needed to know that data were not just for instruction, but they could have also driven performance and behavior. Ms. Thomas reviewed data with her students and she explained:

You don't want to just use it (data) for you to drive your instruction, but you want to use it to drive their [students'] performance, and to drive their behaviors. It makes all the difference in the world.

Ms. Thomas continued:

Well one of the most effective things I think that I do... is to get the students to do a standardized test and then give them [back] the results and teach them to evaluate [their errors]. "Okay, why did you miss this?" I mean when we do a standardized [test], Think Link or something, I give the test back, show them what they missed, and then they have

to figure out and tell me why they missed it. Was it careless errors? Did they not understand the vocabulary? Did they rush through it? Did they miscalculate? They [also] have to identify why they missed it. I think when kids get ownership in that, it makes [them responsible for their own learning]. That would be another good thing I think for them [interns] to do. Not just as teachers and educators to be able to analyze data, but to teach kids how to analyze their data and how to use it. When the kids get them [tests] back and they understand and they see these stupid questions that they missed and they do, “I cannot believe I missed that.” It really does make a difference, but we don’t allow kids to do that. That’s one of the most effective things you can do.

The principals felt the interns were competent in collecting data, but did not know how to use them to improve instruction. Ms. Penney contributed:

I think that [it’s] probably true [interns can collect data but do not know how to use it]. With our DSI meetings [and] our grade level meetings, it is good when we have the interns sitting in there hearing the discussion.

Lesson Plans. Lesson Plans were schedules and programs of strategies for daily instruction in the classroom, that were developed in advanced. Lesson Plans included the concepts that were taught and how the instruction was implemented. The code family Lesson Plans also included the codes of Long-Term Planning, Textbook Application, Creativity, Common Core, and Content Knowledge.

All of the interviewees felt that the interns were competent in writing and teaching their individual lessons, that they took several hours to write. The need and weakness in this area seemed to be the ability to create original lessons, planning lessons for a whole day, long-term

planning, and creating and teaching lessons on their feet. Content knowledge seemed to be solid, except in the areas of grammar and writing. The interns had a need in understanding curriculum standards and why they were important. The teachers and principals, on the other hand, had a strong feeling about the interns needing to understand that students in a class were on different levels, and therefore all lessons needed to be differentiated. The teachers and principals also stated that the interns could not rely solely on the Internet for their lesson plans.

The alternative interns mentioned they wished they had had more knowledge in long-term planning, or even sequential lessons. They were confident in creating one lesson, but were uneasy about the preceding or the following lessons. Alice's commented:

This is going to sound strange probably, but planning [is a need]. I mean how to long-term plan [is a need]. I can make... I mean we often created one lesson plan. Hopefully most people can do that who are in this program, but when you have to think of the beginning with the end in mind, what do I want them to know [that is a problem]. That's what I did at the middle school in a five-week unit and it really made me (long pause), really nervous at first. Then I got a lot of help from my mentor teacher, but I don't feel like I was really prepared to do that without some assistance.

The traditional interns were confident in writing lesson plans. During their internships, they started to appreciate all the details they were required to put into their lesson plans during their labs or practicums. It was now helping them to think ahead in each step of their lessons. It was conveyed that they wished they had had an opportunity to create a lesson when given a curriculum and a textbook. The first time they had to do that during internship was a bit overwhelming. Tracy shared:

That's another thing that helped me be confident. When we were doing those seven-page lesson plans in our practicums, I was sitting there going, "Why are we doing this?" It helped me to think that far ahead in each step, because not being in the classroom before that, I didn't think about everything until I wrote it down. So something [else] I wish that we had been able to do was plan with an actual textbook. Like I would have...there were some of our classes that had us look through textbooks and say, "Here see what they look like." But to actually look at a curriculum, and have to come up with a lesson plan. Whether you tweaked what was in there, or you went by it. Because [when] I looked at the Scott Foresman [a math textbook during internship], I was going, "Huh? How do I read this?" So I think that would be good.

The traditional interns wished they had had an opportunity to plan for a whole day in the classroom before internship, and not for just a few lessons during the day. It was also mentioned that the interns wished they had been given more explanation on standards and why they were important. Tracy also shared:

I think it would be good somewhere along there to let us plan an entire day, because I'm good at planning. I can plan, but I will sit down and plan three hours for one lesson, and I had to be able to know... you've got to plan the whole day. You can't spend that much time. So, I think the long lesson plans were really beneficial, but also to be able to do those brief ones, and we had a lot of experience with the standards. We were required to put them on our lesson plans when we turned them in during practicum, but I feel if there was some connection made there, like the importance of this, why you are doing this [that would have been helpful].

The teachers felt the interns have a hard time differentiating their lesson plans. They were great at coming in with a lesson for the whole group. The problem was apparent when one student was reading zero words per minute, and another student was reading 40 words per minute. Both students needed lesson plans that helped them to achieve and to progress, and this had been known to frustrate the interns. Ms. Allen contributed:

In first grade, I feel like it's amplified a little bit, I [have students] came in with some reading no words per minute, and then I have some that are reading 40 words. So you've got to get them all up. You don't want to detract from those that are reading 40. You want to push them just as hard as you [can]. You know you're going to be graded on this. (pause) Your challenge is the ones that are not reading, and are also the ones the majority of the time that are not getting help at home. So you've got double whammy [for the interns].

The teachers also felt interns needed to be able to create lesson plans on their own. They were always trying to find lessons on the Internet, and every student's needs cannot be met by the Internet. The teachers found their interns being successful, and did a better job teaching, when they created and compiled their own lessons. It was okay to use someone else's lesson, but it still needed to be modified to meet the needs of the student in the classroom. The teachers also mentioned that the interns needed to have prepared to teach, and not use lessons they had not studied. They needed to be familiar with a lesson before they started teaching it. The interns also needed to learn to be flexible, because lesson plans did not always stay lesson plans due to the students' responses and their ability to comprehend what was being taught. All teachers, including interns, needed to be able to think on their feet and change the direction of the lesson, if the students were having difficulty mastering the concept. Ms. Andrews remarked:

Just the lesson planning and being able to come up with their own lesson, and not depending on an Internet lesson or something that's already there, but just thinking [and figuring how to meet that student's needs is an intern weakness].

Ms. Thomas mentioned:

It's okay, to use somebody else's stuff, but you still have to make it your own. You don't have to re-create the wheel every time. You know, if I've got a lesson on fractions, you can look at that and use it as your base, but don't just pull it up that day and expect to teach it without looking at it and without being prepared for it. Now, they've [interns] got to be flexible, and I would hand them something and say here teach it and expect them to be able to teach on their feet. I think a teacher has to be able to teach on their feet, because lesson plans don't stay as your lesson plans. Another thing I think really helps with their lesson plans, is to include time limits and put the amount of time that they are going to spend with each activity.

Ms. Thomas also added that just because it was on Pinterest does not mean that it was correct. The interns needed to make sure they check all content and answers for validity when borrowing lessons. Ms. Thomas continued:

They have to check to make sure. Just because it's on Pinterest and just because it's on [the Internet] doesn't mean that the answers are right.

It was also mentioned that the interns need experience using a textbook and a teacher manual when creating their lesson plans. Ms. Train suggested:

I think some of that exposure to: “This is the textbook. This is how it’s laid out. Here are the components that you’re looking for.” Yes, it has everything under the sun for a reading program for a first grade classroom, but you’re not going to implement all of those components. You can’t in any given day. I think that’s a challenge [for interns] when they’re looking at it trying to go, “Oh my goodness what do I take out of it? I see what you’re doing, but this book has so much more.” And it’s not that the book is [to be] all-consumed, by any means, it’s just a guide to get them on the right path to know where they need to start, what skills they need to teach, and where they need to end up. I think that in itself is overwhelming.

The teachers did seem to feel that the content knowledge of the interns was strong except in the areas of grammar and writing. Ms. Thomas reported:

Now I did observe that [the interns] did not know the parts of speech and the grammar. I do notice that the writing has really gone downhill. [Also] the sentence structure.... I just don’t see real quality writing. I don’t. I just haven’t noticed any “Wow. That’s really a good piece.” Sentences and grammar [are weaknesses and areas of need].

Ms. Thomas continued and said:

[The interns do not know] how important grammar is, and how important proper grammar is. The fact that they don’t diagram sentences anymore, I don’t think they have that background of exactly what a preposition is and exactly how it is used. I think (pause), I think the quality of our writing is going down because we’re not [diagraming

sentences]. I do think it's very important if you're teaching prepositions, and you're teaching those things, that you better know what you're teaching.

The principals commented that the interns needed to realize that a classroom may be a fourth grade classroom, but there were going to be students in that class that were two or three grade levels behind. They could not just teach a one-level lesson and think it was going to meet the needs of all the students. They needed to be able to differentiate and teach a lesson at several levels, so that all the students had an opportunity to succeed and achieve. It was mentioned by the principals that interns cannot just Google their lesson plans. During the school day, they did not have time to pull lesson plans off of the computer. They needed to be able to create a lesson right there, on the spot, in their classroom and go with it. Mr. Potts commented:

It is the same [class], but they are two or three grade levels behind, and you are going to have to [differentiate]. Like when we interviewed the other day for a teaching position. People would use the buzzwords that they'll all use. One person said, "What would you do for this child? This child is struggling." [The intern replied] "Well I would differentiate." Okay. You got the word right. You used it in the right context, but I don't know what you would do. Yeah, we all know that you would differentiate. How would that look? She said, "I'd differentiate with pulling something off the computer." Okay, you're not just going to Google it. Computer's down [now what?]. That's all good and well, but that's not really teaching.

All of those who were interviewed felt that the interns would have benefitted from learning how to differentiate lesson plans and all agreed that it would have been beneficial if they had experienced teaching those differentiated lessons.

Chapter V: Discussion

As professionals and educators, we need to regularly partake in reflection and evaluation concerning the success of our endeavors, in order to validate that our goals and objectives are being met. We also need to be willing to make changes, not for the sake of change, but for the purpose of being more efficient and effective. Our world is ever evolving and changing, and so are today's classrooms. We need to be conscious of what it is going to take for students to achieve in today's evolving classrooms, and be willing to initiate the necessary accommodations in order to effectively meet the needs of our students in our professional areas.

The research questions in this study are helping to look at teacher preparation programs to see how they can improve from good to great. By asking interns, teachers, and principals, to describe the level of preparedness of our interns in the elementary classroom, and to describe the strengths and weaknesses of our interns during their internship, we are searching to find ways where we can tweak our higher education curriculums for the purpose of increasing student achievement in our elementary classrooms.

Fifty percent of our teachers are leaving the profession during the first five years of their careers, partially due to lack of confidence and feeling incompetent when meeting their students' needs (Johnson, 2004). We have solid teacher preparation programs producing strong teacher candidates, but teacher retention is declining and so is student achievement (Duncan, 2010). How can we tweak the curriculum in our teacher preparation programs, so that our interns and future teachers are more confident and competent, when they cultivate the mastery of concepts and skills in their classrooms? What accommodations can be incorporated in the teacher preparation programs that will help eradicate interns' weaknesses and elevate student

achievement in the classrooms? How can we raise the level of preparedness of our interns when they enter their internship classrooms?

The interns, teachers, and principals, who were interviewed in this study, have given us insight into the level of preparedness of their teacher preparation programs and a glimpse of the strengths and weaknesses of interns in the elementary classroom. As educators, we encourage interns to constantly differentiate their lessons in order to meet the needs of their students, so that their students will achieve. How can we differentiate our teacher preparation curriculums so they meet the needs and weaknesses of our interns, and help our interns and future teachers become more confident and competent in the classroom?

The implications of each research question should have a positive relationship with the other. If higher education succeeds in raising the level of preparedness of their interns in the teacher preparation programs, it should help to increase the strengths and dissolve the weaknesses of the interns in the elementary classrooms. If the professors in the teacher preparation programs succeed in meeting the needs of the interns in the classrooms and dissolve their weaknesses, the level of preparedness of the interns in the elementary classrooms should be stronger and rise.

How do elementary interns, teachers, and principals describe the level of preparedness of interns in the elementary classroom?

From this study, the level of preparedness of interns in the elementary classrooms was overall strong except in a few areas, which was due partially to the changing community and the changing needs of our students. The interns felt their content knowledge was strong in all areas of the academics, and they felt they had experienced, during their teacher preparation courses, the use of successful pedagogies in teaching content knowledge to their students. The teachers

and principals agreed that the interns had strong content knowledge, except in the areas of writing composition and handwriting skills. It was interesting during the interviews that the interns did not mention writing as one of their areas of need, but the teachers and principals were strongly concerned that this was a weakness among a vast majority of interns. It was obvious that interns, or neophytes in the teaching profession, don't always know what they don't know. So the triangulation of the data from the input of teachers and principals proved to be valuable in this study (Eisner, 1991). How to teach writing and handwriting definitely needs to be included in the teacher preparation programs.

The reading programs of all the interns, alternative and traditional, seemed to prepare them well for the internship classrooms. The only need mentioned, which was by the principals, was time management during reading instruction. This could possibly be helped through more experience in the classroom labs, so the interns could learn how to judge the time needed to complete certain tasks. It also might be helpful if, from the beginning of teacher preparation, interns were assigned to include time segments on all lesson plans. Time management would then be a learned consideration whenever creating lessons and assignments. Even though reading was a strong area during internship, the principals wanted to emphasize that there is always room for improvement. The principals did mention that all teachers, neophytes or seasoned, should consider regular participation in reading professional development during their teaching careers.

Field experiences were a major part of the teacher preparation program. This was where teacher candidates and interns were able to gain classroom experience by applying and practicing what they had learned during their coursework. Most of the needed knowledge and skills gained by teacher candidates was when they were interacting in the classroom. Experience!

Experience! Experience! Everyone in this study agreed that experience in the classroom is what teacher candidates need in order to have a high level of preparedness during their internship.

As reported by those who were interviewed, the interns whose classroom labs during teacher preparation consisted of two full days per week one semester, and then three full days per week the next semester, had a noticeably higher level of preparedness during their internship, than their predecessors who spent one afternoon and one morning a week in their classroom labs. By spending full days in the classroom each week, the teacher candidates felt they were a part of the classroom community instead of being a classroom visitor. They bonded with the students and gained the interaction and experience they needed, which resulted in a higher level of confidence during their internships. Teacher candidates need more and more classroom experience interacting with students before internship.

Preferably this experience will be with strong quality teachers, in order for teacher candidates to be able to witness and experience correct procedures and the most successful ways to run a classroom. Research has found that the quality of teaching is a powerful influence on student achievement (Duncan, 2010). For this reason, the alternative interns fought hard to be placed in a high-quality internship classroom. Their classroom labs had been in lower quality situations, which resulted in them witnessing what they shouldn't do in the classroom, but they did not have the opportunity to learn what they should do. They felt they needed to experience a successful classroom management system, along with successful teaching strategies, in order to be a successful teacher. The principals in the study felt so strongly about high-quality field experiences that they would only assign their interns to highly organized cooperating teachers, with successful student achievement scores. Teacher Education needs to take the role of

informing the public of the importance of quality teacher preparation and the importance of quality field experiences in the classroom (Fullan, 1993).

If the quality of classrooms during field experiences is important, how do teacher preparation programs ensure they are placing their teacher candidates and interns with highly competent cooperating teachers? Which brings up the theory of teaching schools, where all the teachers in the school are high-quality teachers, who have been trained to mentor teacher candidates (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Trachtmann, 1996). In reality, logistical and financial resources are not always available for teaching schools whenever there is a need for teacher candidates to have high-quality field experiences. The alternative could be a mentoring program where teachers are screened and trained to be cooperating teachers. Requirements could be a graduate course, or 40 hours of professional development during the summer, which could include how to mentor teacher candidates, counseling skills, fundamentals of co-teaching, ways to observe and evaluate, reviewing required activities for lab students and interns during field experiences, etc. Only those who passed the course would be able to serve as a cooperating teacher. Incentives for cooperating teachers, such as tuition credit for a graduate course, could encourage teachers to become part of the program. These teachers need to be compensated so they feel it is worth their while, and so they feel fortunate to be selected for this opportunity.

Not only do teacher candidates need experience in quality classrooms, they also need quality experiences in those classrooms (Duncan, 2010). Duration of the lab was insignificant if the quality of the lab experience was not high. Labs do not need to be just time spent in the classroom. When teacher candidates participated in a classroom lab for Special Education, they needed to have interacted with students with special needs and observed the Special Education

teacher as he or she implemented specific I.E.P. strategies to aid student learning. It is not necessary for them to witness the Special Education teacher monitoring students taking a test or eating lunch. Just because there is classroom lab time on the university course syllabus, does not mean it represents quality time in the classroom lab. Just because it looks good on paper doesn't mean it is of value in the classroom. As professional educators, we need to remember to follow through and validate that the quality lab experiences we arranged were actually the quality lab experiences the teacher candidates received.

During classroom labs, there needs to be a validation of requirements that were fulfilled or learned during this time. Lab students need to be as involved as much as possible in classroom activities. They need a cooperating teacher to facilitate the learning environment for them, while guiding them with short reins. There needs to be co-teaching even at the lab level. In addition, lab students do not need to go from observing to teaching whole group, without having a chance to interact with students before taking on the whole class. It might be helpful to have an agenda of lab requirements for each lab session that needs to be fulfilled by the teacher candidate and initialed by the cooperating teacher at the end of the day. Classroom labs should be a win-win situation. The teacher candidate is receiving quality classroom experience and the cooperating teacher has another pair of hands to help with the students in the classroom.

We cannot shortchange our teacher candidates by not giving them true classroom experiences during labs. From the data we can surmise, that small groups, summer school, and summer camps are beneficial for differentiation and remedial experiences, which are a part of teaching, but cannot replace the bulk of a classroom teacher's daily job of whole group interaction. The actual lab experience needs structure with required components, such as line

items to look for during observations and classroom interaction with individuals, small groups and large groups, along with teacher/lab student daily conference times for reflections.

Classroom labs need to be more structured, so teacher candidates can have beneficial experiences from their observations and classroom activities before internship. All components of preparing a teacher should be covered before internship, since internship is a time for the interns to fine tune and further cement their foundations of teaching skills, strategies, and pedagogies. This is definitely not the time to find out if they can handle teaching in a classroom, since that discovery should have been made during labs. Internships should be a time, in quality situations, for increasing classroom competencies and confidence in our interns. This will not be possible in all situations, but it is a goal that all can strive to obtain.

It is crucial that mentor daily conferencing is scheduled and given time at the end of each day during classroom labs and internships. This is a time for reflection and discussion on daily events, why situations were handled the way they were, and what were other options that could have been considered. It can be a time to discuss what the teacher did that day that is not normally considered a part of teaching. It also could be a time for brainstorming ideas to improve classroom management for a particular class, since the same classroom strategies do not work for every class. At the end of a busy school day, it is easy to skip over time for reflection, so it is imperative that it is written into the daily schedule with adequate time allotted.

During classroom observations, in this study, the interns who were looking for specific items gained more knowledge than those who were just in the classroom observing, not knowing what they should be witnessing. As educators we spend a large percentage of our day observing our students, to the point it becomes second nature. We forget that the novice, or interns, in our profession, have not yet developed the trained observing educator eyes, therefore they do not

notice all the observational data teachers immediately inhale and digest when they walk into a classroom. These eyes can be created through structured classroom experiences. Each classroom observation should have an agenda of items to be noticed at different times of the school day, which could be the base for discussion during the teacher mentoring conferences. Purposeful observations during labs have enhanced the interns' confidence and classroom management skills during their internships. Structured observations could be a powerful learning tool.

An intern seminar during internship was appreciated by all the interns. They greatly benefitted from the professional development topics that were discussed, and the information from the teacher panels was extremely helpful. This course could be differentiated and meet the individual needs of the interns. The interns could be asked to list their top three challenges at the beginning of the semester, and then the instructors could bring in outside resources to help with quick successful strategies in ELL, Dyslexia, Classroom Management, etc. This course could also be a base for networking among the interns for sharing successful strategies and pedagogies. It seems that the cooperating teachers were also interested in the topics of the seminar, and often asked the interns the following day about the ideas and strategies that were shared. How the topics related to the internship classroom would be great discussion items during the mentor reflection time at the end of each day. Although it was tiring for the traditional interns to meet for seminar one evening a week after a long day in the classroom, the alternative interns were excited about their half-day Friday seminar meetings that occurred several times during their internship. They truly looked forward to this time together, where they learned from teachers in the classroom and shared and learned from their peers, especially those who shared the same

school community. The intern seminar might also be an optional consideration with possible graduate credit.

Interns are overwhelmed during their internship by all of the responsibilities a teacher has every day in the classroom. Interns have had experiences creating lesson plans and teaching students, but have not had opportunities to experience the majority of other teacher responsibilities. Teacher responsibilities need to be a part of classroom labs, along with how to organize all of these teacher tasks and duties during a school day. Since many first-year teachers are so overwhelmed when they enter the classroom, this might be one of the causes of the decline in teacher retention during the first five years.

All those interviewed were adamant about interns needing to witness the beginning of the school year, so they could experience the implementation of community building. They all felt that participating in the start of school would have a strong positive effect on the level of preparedness, confidence, and competence of the interns. Harry Wong says the first two weeks of the school year are imperative for building classroom community and setting the classroom management tone for the remainder of the year (Wong & Wong, 2004). Many university calendars do not coincide with the local schools' calendars. Therefore, interns are arriving in the classrooms two weeks after school has started, or in January, halfway through the school year, not having a clue on how the class arrived to the point when the intern first walked through the door. It would be extremely beneficial if internships could even start during preplanning, so interns would be able to experience all the activities that happened in setting up a classroom, along with what to do to be prepared for the first day of school. This would give them more ownership of the classroom and probably more confidence and competence during their internship. If the interns started the semester early, they would also finish early and have extra

time available in the remaining semester to make up any absentee days that may have occurred during the internship. For those interns needing to start their internship in January, they would need to have also experienced their last classroom labs during that previous fall. This would give them an opportunity, as teacher candidates, to start their last set of labs during preplanning, so they would also have the opportunity to help set up a new classroom and witness the first day of school. This tweaking of the calendar would definitely help interns to be more confident and competent as interns and first-year teachers.

Teachers and principals agreed, that interns do not realize how many levels of instruction are needed in each classroom. Just because it is third grade does not mean that all of the students are on third grade level. They did not realize that each classroom in each grade level is unique in student abilities. They also did not realize that a second grade class at one school is not always going to be at the same level as a second grade class at another school. It might be helpful if teacher preparation helped teacher candidates to realize that only a few students in each class are actually average and on grade level, and that every class at every school is unique.

The teachers in this study were adamant about the interns doing their full-time teaching at the end of the internship semester, when they were the most prepared. The interns preferred it sooner than later. Adults coming into classrooms, for the first time, often realize their immune systems have a difficult time handling childhood ailments. If interns were ill and absent during their required consecutive 10 full-time teaching days, they would have to restart their 10 days in order to keep them consecutive. Therefore, interns are concerned about having enough time in the semester to restart consecutive teaching days if that becomes a necessity. Teachers, on the other hand, reported that at the end of the semester, interns were less stressed and more competent and successful during their consecutive teaching days, due to the fact they had more

knowledge of the students and experience in the classroom. Requiring consecutive teaching days during internship to commence after midterm may be beneficial in this situation.

Teaching is not punching a time clock. Interns need to learn at the beginning that teachers work past contract hours, plus cart armloads of work home for the evening hours. It is a disservice to interns to let them go home at 3:00 p.m. while the cooperating teachers stay and do what needs to be done. An intern needs to be the shadow of the cooperating teacher. Wherever they go and whatever they do, the intern should do it too. This includes all classroom duties, bus duty, faculty meetings, professional development, parent conferences, I.E.P. meetings, testing monitoring, etc. This may be another reason for low teacher retention, due to the fact, that first-year teachers do not understand the time commitment in the educational field.

In today's classroom, regular education teachers are now responsible for the learning of all of their students, including those with special needs. Not only do teachers need to know how to identify the different disabilities, they also need to be able to use strategies that will help these students achieve. All students with special needs characteristics do not qualify for Special Education services. After being denied services "at this time", these students are still in the classroom with no extra help for their needs, and the classroom teacher is their only hope for assistance when trying to achieve. Classroom teachers need to be prepared to meet the needs of all children, including those with special needs.

Teacher preparation programs, in order to improve their interns' level of preparedness, need to include Special Education courses, not only for the purpose of helping teacher candidates identify the different disabilities, but also for the purpose of learning pedagogies that could be used to help struggling students in the classroom (Swain et al., 2012). It seems that some teacher preparation programs do not include Special Education programs as part of their regular

curriculum. Others have one course, mainly, for learning how to identify disabilities among students in the classroom, for referral purposes for Special Education services. Very few programs have a course for identifying students with disabilities, and another course for teaching strategies that can be used when teaching students with special needs. In today's classrooms, interns, teachers and principals all agree that interns need both courses in Special Education so they can be prepared to meet the needs of all their students.

In order to meet the needs of the elementary students in today's classroom, Special Education courses need to be focused on the students of the elementary teacher candidates. Obviously, a general Special Education course is not going to be able to teach elementary interns all strategies they need to know. The College of Education is an umbrella for many different specialties, with all different needs when it comes to Special Education. Special Education is so large, with different areas, programs, and disabilities, that one course is not going to be able to cover all the needs of an elementary intern as well as an agricultural intern in secondary education. From the data we can also surmise, that these courses would be more advantageous if taught in the elementary educational cohort. Cohort classes can be more situational and focus on subject matter and issues specific to the elementary classroom. For instance, in an elementary education cohort Special Education class, the teacher candidates might watch situation videos on Special Education issues, followed by class discussions on how to legally handle each situation, while at the same time meeting the needs of the other 17 seven-year-olds the classroom. Interns, in different educational levels, deal daily with different educational situations.

The interns also need to know I.E.P.s, not just what they look like, but how to read them and how to implement their strategies, along with having the experience of an I.E.P. meeting. These experiences would be highly significant in raising the level of preparedness of elementary

interns. Having the opportunity to collaborate with a Special Education teacher would also be a big plus. Interns need to know how to address the needs of their students with special needs.

This study has indicated that experience in the classroom was a major factor of interns feeling more prepared for internship, and this holds true in the area of Special Education. Teacher candidates would benefit from a lab with their Special Education courses, during a time when qualified Special Educational teachers are working with students with special needs, and not just a time when they are monitoring students taking assessments. An alternative solution to this could be a lab placement in an inclusion class, or taking the Special Education course during the semester which included the two- or three-day labs. This would be extremely beneficial, and would give teacher candidates an opportunity to relate what they were learning in their Special Education courses, to what they were experiencing during their classroom labs.

In today's world, we cannot count on all students entering our classrooms being able to communicate in the native language (Samway & McKeon, 1999). All teacher preparation programs need to include strategies for teaching English Language Learners (ELL) along with Culture Sensitivity Training. Not only do interns need to communicate and create instruction for ELL students, but they also need to be able to communicate with their students' parents.

When interns were solo teaching, students, who did not speak English, were arriving at the classroom door for their first day of school in a new country. The intern needed to handle the situation and do what was best for the new student, while still dealing with the other students in the classroom. It would be extremely helpful if strategies are previously shared with the teacher candidates, during teacher preparation, on how to navigate these situations. The school should have an ELL resource teacher on campus at certain times of the week, but she or he is not always available when there is a need. The responsibility of that child's education is on the classroom

teacher. The principals did report that SDAIE (Special Design Academic Instruction in English) strategies are also available for classroom use, but are only helpful if the intern is familiar with them and has had previous knowledge on how and when to implement each strategy.

To help with this issue and increase the level of preparedness of the interns, teacher preparation courses could discuss ELL issues and give teacher candidates an opportunity to differentiate lessons for ELL students. Classroom Management courses could share strategies on how to help non-English speaking students when they arrive at the classroom door. If the methods courses taught remediation strategies in their domains, these strategies would also be helpful with the ELL students, as mentioned by the principals in the study. The ELL discussions should then be followed by role-playing activities, so that the future interns would have some experience being in these situations. Adding a separate ELL course in teacher preparation would be ideal, but may not be realistic in all programs.

Cultural Sensitivity Training would be extremely helpful for interns when trying to communicate with students and parents who do not speak English. In some cultures, the father is the only parent that is allowed to speak. In other cultures, eye contact may be rude. I had a third grade student tell me he understood a concept when he did not, because it would be impolite to tell me that I had failed at my task of teaching it to him. This adds a new challenge when trying to decipher if a student has mastery of a skill. ELL and Cultural Sensitivity Training definitely need to be included into the teacher preparation programs.

Principals and interns in the study requested that teacher preparation programs include Gifted Education, so that the interns are prepared for high-ability students in the classroom. For decades society has considered gifted the “haves” vs. the “have nots.” Society feels students who are gifted are the “haves” and already have the knowledge and skills they need, and can

learn on their own. The “have nots” are all the other students who need help to learn. This is a false assumption. Gifted students need an opportunity to develop their strengths. They deserve at least a year’s growth in achievement every year, just like every other student in the classroom, even though they already know 85 percent of the curriculum on the first day of school.

According to Horace Mann, the public schools are obligated to teach to each child’s full potential (Duncan, 2010). It is imperative that students who are gifted be challenged at every grade level (Rubin, 2009). If they are not challenged, they may become behavior problems in the classroom, or lose interest in school altogether. They will also not have experienced dealing with failure or learning how to study. When challenging situations arise in the future, they will feel extremely uncomfortable, will not know how to handle the situation, and will ignore it completely. The percentage of high school drop outs among students who are gifted is significantly high (Renzulli & Park, 2002). Interns need to be able to differentiate for the high students as well as the low students in their classrooms.

The interns should have a list of technology experiences that will need to be validated or vetted, as part of their requirements for certain labs before internship. Technology is huge in education this century. Changes, advancements, and improvements are constantly happening with technology in today’s classrooms. Classroom teachers are evaluated regularly on their use of technology during classroom instruction. National Board Teaching certification, for seasoned teachers, requires teachers to show evidence of instructional technology use for certification, and the growth of technology use in the classroom during the renewal process. Technology is a part of the teaching profession and due to its constant evolving, it is a major part of teachers’ professional development. Teacher preparation programs need to keep abreast of the evolving technology practices that interns will face daily. Interns need to know how to use and

incorporate today's classroom technology in their classrooms. If their future classrooms do not have the up-to-date technology, then they will be prepared to use the knowledge of what's available, when writing technology grants for keeping their classrooms in the 21st Century. In the future, their students will be competing with other students who have advanced knowledge and experience with present-day technology. All students need the opportunity to work with modern technology, so that none are at a disadvantage.

The interns in this study reported that the online courses and courses taught outside the Elementary Education department were their least effective courses in their teacher preparation programs. They wished these courses had been a part of their Elementary Education cohort. A cohort in education is a group of students traveling through the curriculum at the same time taking and experiencing the same courses together as a group. The interns felt that the cohort classes were extremely beneficial since they were able to zero in on their specific needs for their major. When teacher preparation courses have a high number of elementary education majors, it would be advantageous, and would improve the interns' level of preparedness, to include that course in an elementary cohort if possible.

Strong school partnerships, as reported by the teachers, would also raise the level of preparedness of interns during their internships. We need to build the bond between the public school classroom teachers and the university faculties. The classroom teachers need to be able to welcome the university faculty into their classroom as a resource, and not feel they are there to scrutinize and evaluate every move the teacher makes. The professor is there as a resource for the teacher and not an evaluator. They can learn from each other. We are all on the same playing field with different roles for the same job of helping students to achieve.

Cooperating teachers, in this study, remarked on how great it was when the interns' university supervisors would come out to the schools and meet with the cooperating teachers before internships and review the internship process. They would return several times during the semester to check in, observe the intern teaching, and answer any questions. They were a great support and were readily available when issues arose. The university supervisors were constantly helping to build a mutual bond of respect between the university and the local school, by their mere presence. Some university supervisors still do this, but some do not. There are teachers who feel their classrooms are being judged, and they become defensive every time an educational professor walks through their door. Other teachers, who have had an opportunity to build a relationship with the professors, look forward to their visits and ask for their opinions on classroom issues. They know these professors visit a variety of schools and have probably witnessed the same issues and concerns they are having, in other classrooms. Professors need to consciously treat teachers as the experts they are in their own classrooms, and help build that bond of trust and admiration. By spending time in the internship classroom, professors can also be kept updated on new classroom procedures and challenges, which they can turn around and share with teacher candidates on campus. They are also available to witness educational issues, where they might be able to research pedagogies that would help students in today's classrooms. It is beneficial to all involved, if interns are supervised by teacher preparation professors (Darling-Hammond, 2006a).

Professors in teacher preparation should be able to attend professional development sessions during local schools' faculty meetings where teachers learn about new assessments, test data, technology, and even safety issues. Today's classrooms not only have fire drills, but teachers also have to participate in lock down, active shooter, and diabetic training. These are

issues that professors need to share with all teacher candidates. Higher education instructors need to be a strong component of the local educational community. They are an untapped resource for many schools' systems.

How do elementary interns, teachers, and principals describe the strengths and weaknesses of the elementary interns during their internship?

In this study, content knowledge and instructional strategies were strong attributes among the interns. Their overall reading foundations were also impressive, and they had a basic understanding of educational terminology. It was impressive, when it was reported, that the interns always seemed to come into the classroom very eager and enthusiastic, ready to do what they needed to do and wanting to be professional. The only weaknesses found in content knowledge were writing and handwriting instruction.

In the 1990s, from personal experience, there was an increased focus on writing skills in the elementary classroom to the point that writing became a component of standardized testing in upper elementary grades. This coincided with states giving schools monetary rewards for increased student achievement on standardized testing. So the push was on, and teachers could no longer assign their student's to just write a paragraph, without giving them instructions on how to create that writing. Teachers now had to instruct their students on the elements to include in a good paragraph, along with the genre of the paragraph they wanted written. The problem arose that teachers themselves never had instruction on the proper forms of writing (Smith, 1996). It is difficult to teach and evaluate students on concepts and skills that the teachers never experienced themselves. Soon elementary faculties everywhere were attending professional development sessions on the appropriate methods of writing sentences, paragraphs, and theme

papers, along with the different genres of writing: narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive (McCorkle, 2004).

This was followed by the realization that writing skills now needed to be incorporated into the curriculum standards of the grade level where the students' writing was being assessed. The next unveiling was that the mastery of the writing process was so encompassing, that it was too overwhelming to be included in the curriculum standards for just one grade level. It was soon discovered that all grades need to be actively teaching students how to write. Scope and sequence agendas were being created for all elementary grades, kindergarten through fifth grade. The implication is that all elementary teachers at all grade levels need to know how to teach writing, and therefore all interns need to know how to write.

Now 20 years later, it looks like the push has dwindled, and we have gone back to the way it was. The cooperating teachers in this study all agreed that interns were weak in writing skills and therefore it is difficult to teach something you do not know how to do yourself. The interns were also weak in grammar and sentence structure; mainly due to the fact they did not know the parts of speech. Needless to say, they were not able to diagram even the simplest sentences. Not many classrooms diagram sentences any more, and if they did that might have helped the situation.

The principals interviewed mentioned that writing was definitely a weakness, and probably the weakest area for interns. Not only did the interns not know how to teach the different modes of writing, they could not even recall the writing modes during interviews for teaching positions. In today's classrooms, when teachers are evaluated on their classroom teaching practices, they are required to show how they integrate student writing in all subject

areas. The interns need to be competent in integrating writing throughout their day in the elementary classroom.

Teacher candidates need to know how to write. They need to know the parts of speech, how to write a proper sentence, the elements of a good paragraph, and how to write a five-paragraph essay. They also need to know the rules of grammar and punctuation, so they can teach these skills to their students, as well as being efficiently skilled themselves in editing student writings. Since their students can be assessed on the different modes of writing, the interns need to be knowledgeable of these genres. In addition, the writing process is always prevalent during interview questions for teaching positions. The interns definitely need to be knowledgeable and skilled in the area of writing (Wilde et al., 2009).

How does teacher preparation help interns with this writing weakness? These skills should have been mastered before high school graduation, but that obviously did not happen for all teacher candidates. Some teacher preparation programs require applicants to pass a writing assessment before being admitted to the teacher education program. Other universities have writing centers that offer tutoring to students in need of writing instruction. Teacher preparation programs should include pedagogies for teaching writing skills as a part of a methods course, where teacher candidates might be able to learn how to write as they learn how to teach to write, just like the teachers years ago.

During internship, the interns who did not have a Classroom Management class wanted one, and those who had one, did have stronger Classroom Management skills, but they still felt they needed more instruction in this area (Hertzog, 2002; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Woolfolk-Hoi & Burke-Spero, 2005). The importance of Classroom Management needed to be stressed to the teacher candidates, since many wished they had taken it more seriously when they arrived at

their internship. If Classroom Management is not effective, then students will not be engaged in learning, and achievement will not take place. If interns do not have strong Classroom Management, they cannot teach. So interns do need a Classroom Management course before their internship.

As requested by the interviewees, a Classroom Management course needs to be structured and offered during a semester with a classroom lab so the teacher candidates have a frame of reference, when concentrating on handling different parts of the classroom. Organizational skills and time management need to be hit hard, and mock parent conferences would be extremely helpful. It would also be beneficial if situational videos of classroom issues could be viewed during this course, followed by a discussion on how to handle each situation.

Classroom Management activities need to be a required component of every field experience during teacher preparation. During classroom observations, teacher candidates need to be constantly asking the “Why?” question: “Why is the room set up this way?”, “Why is that student sitting next to that student?”, “Why did the teacher touch that student’s shoulder?”, “Why are papers being collected in this manner?”, etc. During labs, teacher candidates need to be more involved in classroom duties, to understand all that is involved in day-to-day classroom responsibilities. They need to have experienced and witnessed the daily logistics of teaching, such as morning duties and how they are handled, how are papers distributed and collected, what is the discipline plan, what is the procedure for blood from injured students in the classroom, how does the teacher keep the students engaged during instruction, how does the teacher differentiate, etc.?

The principals mentioned that time management seemed to be a weakness with all interns and was a weakness during classrooms reading instruction. This is another issue that could be

helped with more directed experience in the classroom. If interns are aware this is an issue before they start their labs, and have an assignment to discover ways to handle time management when in the classroom, they can zero in and take note on how the classroom teacher deals with time management during reading instruction. Their observations and strategies learned could be shared during university class time. This is another reason why classroom observations need to be structured, so the teacher candidates are aware of what they need to be acknowledging when spending time in the classroom.

Classroom Management also needs to hit Classroom Behavior. Teacher candidates need to be familiar and prepared to implement several different behavior systems, knowing that the same behavior system does not always work with every class. When they do find one that fits, it may only last a few weeks, before another behavior system will need to be implemented. This may be a reason why teacher candidates lack confidence in classroom management. They may feel frustrated, when they are constantly trying to find a new system that works. They have not had enough experience to know that sometimes a plan just needs a little adjustment for it to be successful.

Teacher candidates want to go to the textbooks and find all the answers. This does not work with Classroom Management. Confidence in Classroom Management is built from experience in the classroom. Teachers and principals have stated repeatedly that interns can read from books and try to learn, but the best information comes from experience in the classroom and talking to professionals.

Besides having a Classroom Management course, Classroom Management also needs to be a part of every syllabus in the teacher preparation program. Class discussions need to take place how on each lesson, in each area of the academics, will be taught and managed in the

classroom. All of the areas have different components with different logistics. Each lesson needs to be thought through, such as distribution of supplies, time increments, collecting of papers, options for technology, rubrics, etc. Not planning is a plan for failure.

When trying to be professional, interns need to realize that professionalism in teaching is not only returning reports in on time, dressing properly, earning respect, and having pride to be a part of the teaching profession. It is also realizing that teachers are held to a higher level of conduct inside and outside the classroom. It is important for interns to understand that someone is always there watching, and their reputation is on the line the minute they walk out that door. In the teaching profession, there's a sense of ethics and there's a sense of responsibility to make good choices, and to do the right things. Teachers always need to hold themselves personally accountable when they leave school and be proud of being in the teaching profession.

Data are the driving force of instruction. Interns need to be able to assess a student's achievement so they can plan on how to help that student progress. All those interviewed in this study felt that interns were great at collecting data, but once they had them, they had a weakness in not knowing what to do with them. It may have to do with lack of experience in the classroom, and not observing and experiencing the needs of students being met during classroom labs.

Not knowing how to help students who did not understand or master a concept the first time it was introduced, may be a factor in the low teacher retention the first few years in a career, due to lack of confidence. If an intern only knows how to teach something one way, and doesn't know how to remediate, this can eat at his or her confidence level and add to the feeling of being incompetent. The interns in this study did not know remedial instruction and this was an obvious weakness. Once they taught a lesson, they did not know how to reteach it, so those who did not

master the concept the first time would still have a chance of understanding it from a different approach.

When I interned in Elementary Education in the seventies, it was all about centers and breaking a whole class into several small groups according to the students' abilities. It was also the open concept era, where you had one large room with several teachers and all of their students, who were in flexible small groups that changed frequently. In our centers, we had different color-coded folders for students of different abilities, and there was one color for folders that included activities for students of all abilities. Overall, the open concept was not as successful as educators had hoped it to be, but there were some strategies from that era that would be beneficial today. We can differentiate in our self-contained classrooms today like we differentiated in the open concept classes of yesterday.

My second year of teaching, I had a first grade of 28 students, and I had four to five flexible reading groups and five to six flexible math groups. I had taken the open concept theory and structured it in my self-contained classroom. My students' achievement soared that year. The kids could identify the top group, but they were not able to recognize the levels of the other groups. The opponents of homogenous groups were so afraid students would be pigeon holed, labeled, and remained in one group their whole academic career that they have fought hard to keep heterogeneous grouping.

Today we are so afraid of homogeneous grouping, that we have heterogeneous groups we are teaching homogeneously. We are teaching to the average student, and so few in our classes are average. We need to take a homogenous group and teach it heterogeneously. A class of students at one level can still easily be divided into groups of smaller levels according to each

student's abilities. We need to be able to take a homogenous group, zero in on each student's need, and differentiate to meet those needs.

The principals felt strongly that the interns and all teacher candidates need to know that just because it is a fourth grade class, does not mean all the students are going to be on a fourth grade level. One level lesson plan is not going to work for the whole class. Every lesson needs to be considered on several levels, so that all students will be able to achieve at their own level. The teacher candidates need to know how to create a lesson on several different levels, and they need to have had experience teaching a lesson on several different levels. They need to know how to differentiate. During labs, our preservice teachers need to have the opportunity to apply and practice what they have learned under supervision. It can start out as simple as the undergraduates teaching a general lesson to their students, and following it with two or three different leveled assignments according to their students' abilities.

In order to meet all students' needs in the classroom, interns need to know how to differentiate. In order to differentiate, interns need to know how to use data. In order to use data, interns need to be able to analyze them and understand them. In today's educational world, we have become so data focused, that testing institutions are cramming multiple perspectives into the assessment reports. These reports have evolved to be difficult and overwhelming, for even seasoned teachers, when trying to decipher the data numbers for the information needed when creating the appropriate curriculum to boost student achievement.

Interns need to know the different types of assessments: formative assessments, summative assessments, test scores, observations, project rubrics, etc. They need to be taught how to interpret the assessment data they need in order to differentiate lessons in their

classrooms. The teacher candidates also need to be able to recognize, from the data, if a student has or has not mastered a concept.

In each of the methods courses, the teacher preparation programs should teach the interns ways to remediate students who have not mastered a concept in their area of specialty. They need to think about the different learning styles of their students and how to use the learning pedagogies to teach the concepts and skills that still need to be mastered. Basically the interns need to know multiple ways to teach one concept. All students do not learn the same way. The teacher candidates also need to have experienced what to do with those who have mastered the skill, when trying to reteach the skill to those who did not understand it the first time. Interns need to know not only the definition of differentiation, but how to implement it and have experience doing so in the classroom.

Data are not only a driving force for instruction, but can also drive student performance and behavior. Teachers who were interviewed mentioned that teaching their students how to use their own individual data in the classroom was a factor in helping them to achieve. When students could read their own data, they knew where they had a weakness and in which areas they needed to study. We can use data to teach our students how to deal with failure, and then pick themselves up by their bootstraps and succeed. We live in a data-driven world, so instructing students on the understanding and implementation of data could be considered a life skill. The teacher candidates need to have mastered the art of interpreting data themselves, before they can teach their students the skill of analyzing their own individual data. Interns cannot teach students how to use data if they cannot use it themselves.

The interns in the study were competent in presenting a wonderful lesson, similar to a methods course assignment, with all its bells and whistles, which usually took three hours to

create. Unfortunately, they were not competent in knowing where this lesson fits in the “big picture” or unit of study. They did not know which lesson preceded it, or followed it, or what to do with the students who did not master the concept when it was presented. The interns, in this study, felt that more knowledge and experience in long-term planning and sequential lessons, along with differentiation, would help them with this weakness.

During internship, the interns in this study were handed a textbook and teacher manual. Their cooperating teachers told them to be prepared to teach the next lesson. They were excited about the opportunity, but overwhelmed with the teacher’s manual. They did not know how to read it, where to begin, or how to include everything there. If the interns had been able to create lessons from a teachers’ manual during their classroom labs, they might have been more confident and competent in this situation. Students’ textbooks and teacher manuals may not always be considered a premium resource for teaching today’s children, but they can be a sufficient resource and are readily available in most of today’s classrooms. Interns need to be able to use the only resource they may have available. Teacher manuals can be overwhelming with all of their information and activities, but they can also offer starting blocks on which to build lessons to meet students’ needs. It would be helpful if the interns understood how a teacher’s manual is laid out, and that all of the resources do not have to be used. It is a guide and offers solutions, through lessons and activities, for the different needs of students.

In this study, when a student was struggling with a concept and the cooperating teacher asked the intern to “think on her feet” and help the student understand, the intern panicked and ran to the Internet to “Google” a lesson. In these situations, there was no time to “Google” a lesson. Creating lessons on their own was a weakness and foreign to these interns, and they had

no confidence or experience in this area. Interns need experience creating lessons on the spot and going with it. It is okay if it is brief, as long as it meets the needs of the student.

It is also okay to use someone else's lesson, but the interns need to learn how to adjust, or differentiate, lessons to make them their own and meet the individual needs of their students. They always need to be prepared to teach their lesson and not use ones they have not studied. All lessons need to be checked for accuracy. Just because it is on the Internet does not mean the content knowledge is correct. How to use borrowed lessons may need to be another component for the methods courses' syllabi.

It would be very beneficial if the interns had the opportunity to prepare lesson plans for an entire day or even an entire week before their internship, just like teachers do. This assignment could help them realize that they cannot spend three hours to prepare every lesson. They are going to need to be more creative and use available resources, if they want to be able to create a day's worth of lessons in a reasonable amount of time. If they could share these day-long agendas with their cooperating teachers and then their peers during a university class discussion, they could borrow ideas from each other on how to compact all the needed components into a day. This would give them a taste and a more realistic view of a day of teaching before they reached their internship. They also need to know not to stress over perfecting their weekly lesson plans and that they need to be flexible. My personal lesson plans were usually outdated by 10:00 o'clock, Monday morning, due to different students' responses and the students' mastery of certain skills. Even outdated, they were still an agenda and guide of what I needed to teach, and now they also included side notes for the rest of the week.

State Standards are the concepts and skills that the state department of education has dictated to be taught at each grade level. The interns confessed that they included them in their

lesson plans, because they were on the lesson plan template, but they really did not understand what they were or why they were important. I have discovered through my educational career that it is easier to complete extra work that seems unnecessary at the time, if I understand the reasoning and importance behind it. As educators we need to make sure that just because a term seems self-explanatory, not all interns have an educational background, and some will need a deeper explanation. State Standards help with the scope and sequence of the classroom curriculum from year-to-year. This is a guide to make sure that different concepts are taught each year in the right sequence, and that the same concept is not repeated year-after-year if there is no need to do so.

The interns were appreciative of the detailed lesson plans they were assigned to create during the methods courses. When they actually presented the lessons to their own students, they then realized the significance of all the components and were thankful they were there. It might be helpful if the importance of the components on the lesson plan template were explained in more detail when presented to interns to complete. That being said, sometimes it doesn't help to explain an issue, if the need for that issue has not been experienced. Interns need more time in the classroom before internship.

To help with the lesson plan dilemma, it might be advantageous if the interns were assigned to create a large unit in one of their methods courses, which would include several different types of lessons in a well-reasoned, sequential order for a particular grade level class. The unit could include that big lesson they took three hours to create, a borrowed lesson from the Internet that they made their own, a lesson from a teacher's manual, along with a brief lesson they created to meet a student's individual need. A differentiated lesson for students working at several different levels would also be a beneficial component. This would also be a great

opportunity for the teacher candidates to include several different types of assessments such as a formative assessment, summative assessment, observation, a rubric, and a self-made test and quiz. This assignment will give the interns an opportunity to have experienced different ways to implement and assess lessons when meeting their students' needs.

Future Study

As professional educators in higher education, we should refer to Arthur Levine and study and copy the practice of effective teacher preparation programs and learn from each other what works best (Duncan, 2010). Due to our individual logistics and resources, all components of all teacher preparation programs will not work for every program or can be duplicated by every program. One size does not fit all, but we can borrow and share ideas and pieces from each other's programs that could benefit our teacher candidates and help our students achieve in the classroom. That being stated, in order for all teacher preparation programs to reflect and tweak for improvement, will require a willingness of the institutions to cooperate and be transparent with each other (Plecki, Elfers. & Nakamura, 2012).

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Appendix A

Interns' Interview Questions

Interns' Interview Questions

Introduction:

My dissertation is on the strengths and weaknesses of the interns once they arrive in the internship classroom. We have wonderful teacher preparation programs graduating qualified teacher candidates, but research is telling us that 50 percent of them are leaving the profession during the first five years. Many are leaving due to feeling incompetent and lacking confidence when meeting the needs of their students. Teacher retention is going down and student achievement is going down. I am looking to see how we can help our teacher preparation programs go from good to great. How can we tweak our teacher preparation programs so interns, and later on teachers, will be more competent and confident when meeting the needs of their students in the classroom?

Questions:

Now that you are in your internship, what do you think are your strengths and weaknesses? Why do you think that is?

How prepared are you during your internship?

What do you feel are your strengths and please explain why?

Now that you are a full-time intern in the classroom, in which areas do you think you could benefit from more professional development and please explain why?

Do you feel confident in your internship classroom? Why or why not?

Do you feel competent in your internship classroom? Why or why not?

What do you feel are strengths and weaknesses of your teacher preparation program?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me that would help enrich our teacher preparation programs?

(Follow up questions were asked for clarification purposes or further information.)

Appendix B:
Teachers' and Principals' Interview Questions

Teachers' and Principals' Interview Questions

Introduction:

My dissertation is on the strengths and weaknesses of the interns when they arrive in the internship classroom. We have wonderful teacher preparation programs graduating qualified teacher candidates, but research is telling us that 50 percent of them are leaving the profession during the first five years. Many are leaving due to feeling incompetent and lacking confidence when meeting the needs of their students. Teacher retention is going down and student achievement is going down. I am looking to see how we can help our teacher preparation programs go from good to great. How can we tweak our teacher preparation programs so interns, and later on teachers, will be more competent and confident when meeting the needs of their students in the classroom?

Questions:

What do you think were the strengths and weaknesses of your interns, both traditional and alternative, during their internships? Why do you think that was?

How prepared were your interns, both traditional and alternative, during their internship?

What do you feel were your interns', both traditional and alternative, strengths and please explain why?

In which areas do you think your interns, both traditional and alternative, would benefit from more professional development and please explain why?

Do you feel your interns, both traditional and alternative, were confident in their internship classrooms? Why or why not?

Do you feel your interns, both traditional and alternative, were competent in their internship classrooms? Why or why not?

What do you feel were the strengths and weaknesses of your interns, both traditional and alternative, teacher preparation programs?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me that would help enrich our teacher preparation programs?

(Follow up questions were asked for clarification purposes or further information.)

Appendix C

The Code and Code Family Book

The Code and Code Family Book

Classroom Behavior

The code Classroom Behavior dealt with plans and strategies that maintained appropriate behavior in the classroom. Sample quote:

Like your token system might work for one class one year, but it may not work the next year, and it may not work for every student.

Classroom Community

The code Classroom Community dealt with a classroom community, where the students had a sense of belonging and shared a common purpose, goals, and values with the other members of the class. It was where the students felt safe and accepted, knew the procedures, and knew what was expected of them. Sample quote:

If they could.... I think that it would be so beneficial [for the interns], just to see how do you teach community? How do you teach routines? How do you teach the rules? How do you teach a kid how to do the lunch count?

Classroom Experience

The code of Classroom Experience dealt with the time teacher candidates spent in the elementary classroom. Sample quote:

When they [the interns] come, I think they're very enthusiastic and are ready to do what they need to do. I think everybody has a good idea of what they think they're supposed to do. They know what they are supposed to teach and how to teach it, the way it reads in a book. When you actually do it, it's a little different.

Classroom Instruction

The code Classroom Instruction dealt with the different strategies used when helping a student to master a concept or skill in the classroom. Sample quote:

Once they grade the papers they are going to have to go over and reteach.

Someone doesn't get it, and the intern thinks they had gotten it.

Classroom Interaction

Classroom Interaction included the experiences lab students had with actual student contact in the classroom. Sample quote:

You know it's different teaching three children right here versus coming in and trying to do 21.

Classroom Labs.

Classroom Labs and or Practicums, in this study, were addendums to individual college courses, where the teacher candidates had an opportunity, under supervision, to practice in the field of study the methodologies or pedagogies they had learned during a course.

Classroom Management

According to The Glossary of Education Reform, classroom management refers to the variety of skills and techniques that are used by teachers to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, and on task so that they can be academically productive in the classroom. The Classroom Management code family also included codes of Classroom Behavior, Organization Skills, Time Management, Parent Conferences, Parent Involvement, and Unexpected Challenges.

Sample quote:

You got to see [classroom management during] all of our hours [in the classroom], which was a good [thing] that we got to see different styles.

Classroom Management Course

A Classroom Management Course was a course in the teacher preparation curriculum that included the skills and techniques classroom teachers used to keep their classrooms organized and orderly. It also included procedures on how to effectively teach students. Sample quote:

We never had a Classroom Behavior course, and we did ask about it. They say the university just expects you to kind of learn as you go. So, I have learned through good teachers, and that is why I feel it is so important to see good teachers and those good teaching styles, so we know how to implement them later on.

Classroom Observations.

Classroom Observations occurred when the teacher candidates spent time in the classroom watching and observing classroom interactions and activities. Sample quote:

So I have 250 hours of observing other teachers.

Cohort Classes

The code Cohort Classes dealt with the teacher preparation courses that were taught to the same group of students usually working toward the same degree at the same time. Sample quote:

I know it's hard to cram it all into the cohort program, but even things like Special Education and the reading courses [would have been better in the cohort]. If they were within your cohort, it could be more direct [to Elementary Education] rather than...

Content Knowledge.

Content Knowledge was information or knowledge about a certain topic or subject.

Sample quote:

I feel like all of my courses prepared me [with a basic foundation]. Like the reading, math, science, social studies. I really felt like they prepared me for [the classroom].

Data

Data, in the classroom, was the results from assessments that informed the instructor what a student knew and did not know. It was also related to the level of instruction at which a student needed to be taught in order to see progress or achievement. Sample quote:

Being familiar with your data, and then once you have that data, what do you do with it [was an intern weakness]? What are your next steps, when you're meeting the needs of IEP students, when you're meeting the needs of ELL students, when you're meeting the needs of your [students] at risk?

Duration of Classroom Labs

Duration of Classroom Labs was the amount of time a teacher candidate was scheduled to be gaining experience in the classroom. Sample quote:

I like how [my university's] program, as you go up in the program, your time in the classroom increases, so it's a gradual process.

Duration of Internship

Duration of Internship was the length or number of calendar days an intern is required to be in the classroom. Sample quote:

[The interns need] more exposure to the classroom. I mean I understand the labs, and I understand the internship, but I feel like they're only getting a small piece to that puzzle.

English Language Learners (ELL)

The code of English Language Learners concerned teaching those students who were not able to communicate effectively using the English Language. Sample quote:

I had a student move from Korea into my classroom in the middle of my 10 consecutive days [intern in complete control of class]. I didn't know what to do. She didn't know her name because they changed her name when they moved to America. She didn't know anything. She didn't speak a word [of English] and just sat there like playing with things on her desk...

Field Experiences

Field Experiences in this study were the part of a college curriculum that provides, under supervision, experience and or work in the field of study. Field Experiences usually included Classroom Labs, Practicums, and Internships.

Gifted Education

The code of Gifted Education in this study dealt with teaching students who have high levels of cognitive ability in areas of intellect, academic fields, creativity, leadership, etc. Sample code:

That group of children [Gifted] oftentimes is the most neglected of all of the groups, because if we teach to the middle and we re-teach and over teach the disadvantaged, oftentimes there's not enough [time] allotted for those children. They're given extra homework, or read at their desks, or do more of the same. So

I think it's critical to keep them engaged and interested and find their passion and let them fly with it.

History of Education

The code History of Education dealt with a course in the alternative interns' teacher preparation program's curriculum that dealt with the history of education and teacher preparation. Sample quote:

There were some courses, one in particular, which I heard they were doing away with [and it] was the historical [class]. It was like the history of education. I think I heard the university is cutting it out... probably I think it was good to learn about where our education came from...the background, but I don't know that I am going to use that out here in the real world.

Intern Cluster

Intern Cluster was a group of cooperating teachers at one school who shared in the evaluation of each other's interns. Sample quote:

So there were two interns at our school. I know it's hard with all this, but I think it would be almost more beneficial, if there was maybe another one or two. Maybe we could all meet together like once every two weeks, and maybe just talk.

Intern Seminar

Intern Seminar was a class for interns during their internship where they came together to discuss issues and concerns or participate in professional development. Sample quote:

In our internship, there's a developmental [class], every so many days, [that] we go to [at] the university. So many Fridays we've had these. They've been fabulous. We've talked to teachers that are actually in the classroom, who gave us tips.

Internship.

The teacher candidate's internship is usually a semester long and is a supervised, full-time, on-the-job training that usually culminates the teacher preparation program. The Internship code family included the codes of Internship, Application, Collaboration, Competence/Confidence, Math /Science Confidence, Teacher Evaluation, Duration of Internship, and Intern Seminar.

Internship Starting the First Day of School.

The code, the Internship Starting the First Day of School, dealt with the interns starting their internship the same time students in the classroom started their school year. Sample quote:

If I had to pick one thing to change about the program, it would be to see a classroom at the very beginning of the year.

Lesson Plans

Lesson Plans were schedules and programs of strategies for daily instruction in the classroom, that were developed in advance. Lesson Plans included the concepts that were taught and how the instruction was implemented. The code family Lesson Plans also included the codes of Long-Term Planning, Textbook Application, Creativity, Common Core, and Content Knowledge. Sample quote:

That's another thing that helped me be confident. When we were doing those seven-page lesson plans in our practicums, I was sitting there going, "Why are we

doing this?” It [did] helped me to think that far ahead in each step, because not being in the classroom before that, I didn’t think about everything until I wrote it down.

Measurement and Evaluation

The code of Measurement and Evaluation dealt with a teacher preparation course that used data and emphasized the importance of pre-assessments and quickly figuring out the strengths and weaknesses of each child in the classroom.

Sample quote:

I’ve got to find out each child’s [needs]. I’ve got to learn their strengths and weaknesses quickly, so I know where to take them. So, I do think the benefits of our classes [included] teaching us you’ve got to have pre-assessments.

Observations during Internship

Observations during Internship was the time teacher candidates spent watching and observing the teacher and students during the day in the classroom. Sample quote:

Ms. Andrews, a first grade teacher, commented that an intern was observing her during their intervention and enrichment time in second grade, where they have small groups of students in math and reading. She asked the intern, afterward, if she could tell the difference between the groups.

Online Courses

The Online Courses in this study, which were part of the teacher preparation program, were taught by departments outside of elementary education over the Internet. Sample quote:

I think there’s a lot of great things about our program but [not] the online classes, and those are mainly in other departments.

Organizational Skills/Time Management

The code family of Organizational Skills and Time Management dealt with using time and resources in an effective way in the classroom. This code family included the codes of Organizational Skills and Time Management. Sample quote:

One thing that I noticed pretty early was my organization skills, once I was in the classroom. I didn't realize how many duties; how many things a teacher actually has to do. That was really eye opening to me once I was learning through internship.

Parent Conferences

The code of Parent Conferences dealt with meetings between parents and the teacher, and possibly other resource teachers, to discuss the student's progress and or issues. Sample quote:

Doing some mock parent conferences with role playing and modeling, and that sort of thing would be [helpful]. Because here you've got a 22-year-old kid who [needs] to come across professional, but can't come across knowing more than the parent, but [still] being the professional in the situation, and that's a hard place to be.

Prepared for Internship

Prepared for Internship referred to an intern's level of mastery of skills and knowledge needed to be successful when teaching and interacting with students during an internship.

Sample quote:

I'll be honest, when I walked into my internship I was very confident. I was like, "I got this." But then I quickly realized I didn't.

Previous Experience

The code family of Previous Experiences dealt with teacher candidates and their education, business opportunities, and time spent working with children before their internship, along with the impact this might have on the interns' competence or confidence within the internship classroom. The Previous Experience code family also included the codes of Intern Background and Previous Degrees before internship. Sample quote:

Just having real world experiences, I think helps me coming into a classroom. I think being older and having more maturity helps me coming into a classroom. I really do.

Professionalism

The code family of Professionalism represented the level in which the interns exhibit their educational training through their skills, behavior, and judgment. The code family of Professionalism included the codes of Maturity, Work Ethic, Eagerness and Enthusiasm, Flexibility, Attitude, Certification, Parenthood, and Age Level. Sample quote:

My prior background...has helped me...in the professional side of it [education], as far as [working with] the administration, the paperwork, things that you need [in order] to achieve [in the classroom]. So, I feel like that's definitely helped me for sure.

Quality of Internship

Quality of Internship referred to the competency of the cooperating teacher and how well the students are engaged and achieving in the classroom. Sample quote:

I do think, seeing good and bad teachers has really helped me. I've learned what not to do. Although I wish I would've seen more good teachers.

Quality of Lab Experiences

The code of Quality of Lab Experiences dealt with the quality level of benefits it provided for teacher candidates during their classroom experiences. Sample quote:

I thought the schools that I've been to in my lab experiences and internship have been very different in the way things run. The teachers have been different and the students have been different. I do believe it prepared me for internship, but I don't think after those first few lab experiences before internship, I could have handled my own classroom.

Reading.

The Reading code concerned the strengths and weaknesses of the interns in reading content knowledge and reading pedagogies that were included in the teacher preparation coursework and labs. Sample quote:

I got so much from the reading classes. I have never learned that much (laughing) in that given amount of time. I can't say enough good things about the reading.

School Partnerships

School Partnerships were the relationships the university had with the local schools. These partnerships included agreements between the university teacher preparation program and local school districts, to allow teacher candidates and university faculties to spend time in the local classrooms. Sample quote:

If I'm not mistaken the intern supervisor came out when I had [an intern] a few years ago. She came out and met with me first, and then she met with the intern.

Special Education

In this study, comments about the code family of Special Education, the practice of educating students with special needs, also included comments concerning the codes of Inclusion Classes, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and Gifted Education. Sample quote:

I do wish there were either more, or I hate to say this, maybe a more effective Special Education course, because I know not every intern was in an inclusion class.

Split Internships

Split Internships divided the time spent during internship between two or more areas or locations. Sample quote:

It's a big difference between a kindergartener and a sixth grader. I liked it for the fact, [that we were able to do two different grades for our internship since] I didn't get to see every grade [during teacher preparation].

Teaching vs. Nurturing

Teaching vs. Nurturing dealt with situations when interns and new teachers struggled with the thin line that sometimes appeared between teaching a student and mothering or coddling a student. Sample quote:

Once I got into my internship, I felt like I was actually connected to the first graders well. A lot better than I thought I would. It's hard because you want to hug them every day. You want to be their best friend, but you are the teacher.

Technology

Technology in this study dealt with the effective use, in the classroom, of technology tools and equipment during instruction and learning. Sample quote:

One other thing that I think would be helpful is [if] we had a really good technology course. I think we need to incorporate Smart Boards, into that, because a lot of the classes and schools have Smart Boards, whiteboards, different things like that.

Terminology

The code of Terminology had to do with the content knowledge of the words and terms used in the field of education. Sample quote:

I would hear a lot of the teachers talk the language that's used in the classroom: RTI, and what is the book called?

University Coursework

The code and code family of University Coursework involved the teacher preparation programs and the university courses teacher candidates are required to take before their internship. Along with University Coursework, this code family also included the codes of Reading, Writing, Technology, and Terminology.

Writing.

The code family of Writing dealt with how well the interns wrote and their content knowledge about the writing process. This code family also included the code of Handwriting.

Sample quote:

Writing is definitely a weakness. Writing is probably the weakest area I've seen. Oftentimes, not only do they [interns] not know how to teach the modes of writing...