SÍ SOY BILINGÜE, But…: Latino Teachers Preparedness on The Border

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Abstract

Improving educational achievement is critical for the long-term success of the majority Latino population on the Texas-Mexico border which includes identifying and mediating gaps in teacher preparation. This study examined beginning teachers’ perceptions of how well they were prepared within an educator preparation program on the border. One-hundred and eight teachers were surveyed. Results indicated that these teachers felt prepared in the areas of designing lesson plans, maintaining order, and implementing new methods of teaching. They felt less prepared to address the needs of special education students and English language learners. Consequently, courses are being redesigned to address these gaps.

Texas faces critical shortages of teachers, especially in the border region where population growth has increased demand exponentially. The Texas-Mexico border region is uniquely different from the rest of Texas; it is a cultural economic and educational entity unto itself (Arreola, 2002). While Latinos are still a minority in the state of Texas at 32 % of the population, they comprise a large majority in the frontera or border region at 75-95 % of the population depending upon the particular county (Latino Research Center, 2002). If considered as a 51st state, the Texas border region would rank first in the nation in terms of poverty, first in the percentage of school children living in poverty, first in the number of unemployed, first in the percentage of adults who do not have a high school diploma, and dead last in per-capita personal income (Sharp, 1998). It is an area that has experienced tremendous economic and population growth, but this growth has not brought prosperity to the vast majority of the border residents (Sharp, 1998). Education is critical to success of the region.

A close look one border community, Laredo, provides a snapshot into the reality faced by beginning teachers on the border. According to the recent census data, the population of Laredo grew by 44.9 % from 1990 to 2000, making Laredo one of the ten fastest growing cities in the nation with a population of 193,117 in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Even if no one new moved to Laredo from either side of the border, the population would continue to grow because the median age is 26.4 meaning that half of the population is under the age of 27 (County Information Project, 2006). Needless to say, they can’t seem to build schools fast enough in Laredo.

Two school districts serve the city of Laredo: Laredo Independent School District (LISD) and United Independent School District (UISD). LISD serves older, central, downtown Laredo. UISD serves much of the newer growth areas of Laredo, both to the north and to the south of central Laredo. UISD is the “richer” of the two districts in terms of its property tax base, but it includes
everything from million dollar mansions in the north to *colonias*¹ in the south. LISD is made up of primarily older residential areas with limited commercial development and is “landlocked” by UISD. However, both districts are considered property poor school districts. The Robin Hood Plan in Texas which redistributes $1.2 billion each year from roughly 130 property wealthy school districts to roughly 900 property poor school districts has greatly benefited both UISD and LISD. If Robin Hood were to be dismantled, the two Laredo districts stand to lose 18.8 million dollars in funding each year (Cortez, 2004). However, ten plus years of Robin Hood cannot even begin to wipe out over a hundred years of neglect on the border. Nowhere is the intersection of poverty and ethnicity more pronounced than in the public schools of Laredo, Texas.

In LISD, 99.3 % of the students are Latino and 96.2 % are classified as economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2005). UISD is more racially and economically diverse although not by much. 97.4 % of the student population is Latino, 73 % of whom are economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2005). 65.9 % of LISD students are classified as Limited English Proficient ² (LEP) and 82.4 % are listed as being “at risk” (Texas Education Agency, 2005). In UISD, 45.3 % are English language learners with 66 % classified as “at risk” (Texas Education Agency, 2005).

The primary mission of the College of Education at this university in the borderlands is to prepare teachers in accordance with the standards established by the state of Texas. In actuality, we are in the business of preparing Latinos from the fronteras to teach on the fronteras in less than ideal conditions. The Texas Teacher Recruitment and Retention Study indicated that an estimated one-third to one-half of all new teachers will leave the teaching profession within five years (Texas Association of School Boards, 2002). Teacher retention is critical if we are ever to meet the demand for teachers. Various researchers have recommended revamping teacher education programs as a way of improving teacher retention (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Foster & Cobb, 2000). In designing and implementing effective teacher education programs, it critical that teacher preparation faculty solicit feedback from beginning teachers in order to identify gaps in the preparation program. This is especially warranted in the case of the border region where many beginning teachers are Latinos from the border region, who have been trained in the border region, and consequently are employed as teachers in the border region.

One component that could assist in the retention of beginning teachers is the quality of preservice education that they receive. Educator preparation entities can continue to train and produce teachers, but if the beginning teacher is not educated in key areas such as teaching second language learners, or given opportunities to apply learning theories in the field, the likelihood of them staying in the classroom for more than five years is low. Successful teaching is an art that takes insight, knowledge, and numerous years of classroom experience to grow; yet, in many cases new teachers do not remain long enough in the classroom to develop the art of teaching (Portner, 2003). By providing early field experiences, a strong knowledge base, and the skills to work collaboratively with others in an educational setting, teachers may stay in the classroom long enough to develop a repertoire of skills and remain in the classroom for their entire professional career.

From the first day of school, beginning teachers are responsible for working with diverse

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¹ The Office of the Secretary of State of Texas defines a “colonia” as a residential area along the Texas-Mexico border that may lack some of the most basic living necessities, such as potable water and sewer systems, electricity, paved roads, and safe and sanitary housing.

² Although we, like many researchers, prefer to use the term English language learner (ELL), the state of Texas uses the designation Limited English Proficient (LEP).
groups of students. They must deal with them intellectually, emotionally, and socially (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). Novice teachers almost immediately feel overwhelmed with all the duties that the teaching profession entails. They may encounter a professional plunge when teachers, from the moment they are awarded their first license, are considered full members of the profession and not as novices (Schlosser & Balzano, 2002). Beginning teachers come into a situation where they must deal with the same responsibilities that a 20-year veteran would face in teaching (Birkeland & Johnson, 2002).

Numerous studies have been conducted in regards to educator preparation program effectiveness (Williams & Alawiye, 2001; Andrew, 1990; Andrew & Schwab, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hill & Brodin, 2004; San, 1999). Williams and Alawiye (2001) stated:

The evaluation of an institution must, to a large extent, be based on the degree to which its educational program meets the needs of students in the area it serves. Since these needs are related to the opportunities, conditions, and program effectiveness, it is important that the students analyze and describe the services they generally receive from the institution (p. 2).

Thus, beginning teacher perceptions of their preparedness is one area that an institution needs to evaluate in order to assess the effectiveness of the educator preparation program.

Williams and Alawiye (2001) in a study of 33 student teachers found that these student teachers’ perceived the strengths of their teacher preparation program to be as follows: (a) care about students, (b) strong, knowledgeable professors, (c) lesson planning, (d) knowledgeable staff, (e) staff well organized, and (f) well prepared. Student teachers’ perceived weaknesses of the teacher preparation program included: (a) classes not consistent, (b) cooperating teachers, (c) computer classes, (d) math class, (e) student teaching last quarter, (f) selection of faculty to teach methods courses, (g) classroom management, (h) class availability, (i) student/supervisor ratio, (j) screening of master teachers, (k) preparing portfolios, (l) reading in content area for physical education, and (m) lack of communication with main campus. In another study, San (1999) examined the perceptions of 304 first, second and third-year beginning teachers to find out their perceived levels of preparedness from their educator preparation program. Results indicated that the beginning teachers rated their pre-service preparation as very low in reference to developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes for teaching. In a similar vein, Hill and Brodin (2004) found that first year physical education teachers felt unprepared in the areas of classroom management and discipline, special needs populations, assessment, and parental involvement. In a survey of new teachers by the National Center for Education Information (NCEI), “…it was unanimously concluded that teachers think the best way to learn all aspects of teaching is a combination of college courses on campus and field-based experiences” (NCEI, 1997, p. 30). The new teachers surveyed about their preparedness believed they had been best prepared in subject matter knowledge, followed by teaching methods, then by understanding of child/adolescent development. When asked the areas in which they felt least prepared, they reported difficulties in recognizing and addressing student learning styles, classroom management and discipline, and strategies which would enable them to function effectively in schools as an institution. Darling-Hammond (2006) found that 86% of recent graduates of exemplary teacher preparation programs felt well-prepared, in contrast to 65% percent in the comparison group (p. 60). Graduates from the exemplary programs rated their preparation highly in the following areas: “promoting student learning, understanding learners, teaching critical thinking, and developing curriculum” (p. 64). Of particular interest to this study, neither of the exemplary program group nor the comparison group felt well prepared to address the needs of English language learners (p. 65).
This study examined beginning frontera teachers’ perceptions of how well they had been prepared to teach at an educator preparation program in the borderlands. As will be demonstrated by the demographic data, our graduates are almost solely from the border region themselves who remain in the border region to teach. The border region is an area of great need. If we are ever to advance in the area of education, we must engage in localized research in order to address local needs and formulate local solutions.

Method

Participants
The participants included second- and third-year teachers currently employed in either one of two school districts in the border region who were teaching pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. The respondents under investigation consisted of 159 teachers who graduated from a university located on the Texas-Mexico border. The participants for this study were selected through purposive sampling (Patton, 1990).

The original population of this study involved 159 second- and third-year teachers; however, a total of 108 participants completed the questionnaire. This represents a more than adequate return rate of 68% (Bartlett, Kotlik & Higgins, 2001). Of the 108 respondents, 65 (60%) were in their third year of teaching and 43 (40%) were in their second year of teaching.

Research Design
Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix A) entitled, Second- and Third-Year Questionnaire (O’Dell, Zhang, Wang & D’Esposito, 2004), which was developed to address the issue of the quality of beginning teachers. The original questionnaire, by Dr. Lisa O’Dell, was modified to address the issues that beginning teachers face on the border. Specifically, the survey sought to determine beginning teachers’ perceptions of how well they were prepared to design lesson plans that engage students in learning, implement new methods of teaching that meet the identified needs of students in the classroom, address the needs of special education students, and address the needs of English language learners. It was of particular interest to ascertain if beginning teachers felt prepared to address the needs of English language learners since the majority of the beginning teachers are from the border region, were prepared on the border, and currently teach in border schools. The questionnaire consisted of five different sections. Section one pertained to the participants’ demographics; section two documented their current teaching assignment; the third section focused on their teaching preparedness; the fourth component explored teachers’ perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of their teacher preparation program; and the final section pertained to the teachers’ future plans in education.

Validity was determined by a panel of experts made up of current educators, who included (a) a Chair from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, (b) a College of Education faculty member, (c) an elementary school administrator, and (d) a classroom teacher. These experts reviewed the process used to develop the questionnaire, as well as the questionnaire itself (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The item assessment was based on the following criteria:

1. Clear instructions
2. Clarity of each question
3. Clear understanding of each section
4. Detail in each question was adequate to answer research questions
5. Relevancy of items to research questions
6. Convenience of instrument in data collection (Glenn, 2000).
A field study was conducted to establish the reliability of the survey instrument developed for this study. The coefficients of reliability indicated that the questionnaire developed and implemented by the researcher for use in this study had an appropriate level of internal consistency and thus was suitable for use in this study. An interrator reliability involving the use of content analysis was conducted to examine the consistency of the responses given in section four of the questionnaire and complete agreement was reached in the identification of emergent themes and specific examples of these constructs.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data regarding beginning teachers’ perceptions of how well their undergraduate program prepared them to assume particular teaching responsibilities. The Likert scale results were reported using frequencies and percentages incorporated into tables. A simple analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure was used to determine the probability of significant differences in perceptions between the two groups of teachers categorized by years of teaching experience. Furthermore, content analysis procedures were used to analyze second-year and third-year teachers’ perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their teacher preparation program. Finally, an examination of the entire data set was conducted to determine if there were patterns of information that tended to typify second-year teachers and those with three years of experience.

Results

Demographic data collected in sections one and two of the survey served to validate what education faculty at this border institution already suspected: we are preparing students from the frontera to teach on the frontera. One hundred percent of the respondents were Latinos and Spanish/English bilinguals in varying degrees. Regarding the number of years that the participants attended the university from which they graduated, 40 (37%) of the participants attended for two years; 22 (20%) and 33 (31%) attended for three and four years, respectively. Given high poverty rates in the border region, typically many of our students attend the local community college for two years since it is less expensive. The remaining 13 (12%) attended for five or more years. Sixty (56%) of the respondents were certified to teach in the area of Early Childhood Bilingual Education. Upon analyzing the data in regards to how many miles away from their hometown the participants taught, 65 (60%) taught in their hometown, 25 (23%) worked from 1-10 miles from their hometown, 11 (10%) were employed from 11-20 miles from their hometown, and seven (7%) taught more than 20 miles from their hometown. The data supports that graduates from the border region do not leave the border area; as 101 (95%) indicated that they work from 0-20 miles from their hometown.

In regards to the ethnicity of their students, one hundred percent of the participants indicated that they had a majority of Latinos in their classroom, with 76 (70%) reporting that 100% of their students were Latino. All of the participants reported having significant numbers of English language learners and economically disadvantaged students in their classrooms. This, of course, comes as no surprise to anyone who lives and works on the border.

Section three of the questionnaire focused on aspects of the participants perceptions of their preparedness to teach. The results are presented in Table 1. Eighty-one percent of the participants reported that they felt prepared or very prepared to design lesson plans that engage students in learning. At least 61% indicated that they were prepared to maintain order in the classroom
and control misbehaviors that occur. Approximately half of the respondents reported that they had learned to use student performance assessment techniques and to implement new methods of teaching to meet the identified needs of students in the classroom, including English language learners. Thirty-eight percent of those surveyed claimed that they felt competent to address the needs of Special Education students. Overall, 56% of the respondents claimed that they felt prepared during their first year of teaching.

Table 1
Participants’ Perceptions of their Teaching Preparedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Activities</th>
<th>VU</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>SU</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>VP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design lesson plans that engage students in learning</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>17 (16)</td>
<td>48 (44)</td>
<td>40 (37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain order in the classroom</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>10 (9)</td>
<td>25 (23)</td>
<td>39 (36)</td>
<td>31 (29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control misbehaviors that occur</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>12 (11)</td>
<td>25 (23)</td>
<td>45 (42)</td>
<td>20 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use student performance assessment</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>12 (11)</td>
<td>37 (34)</td>
<td>41 (38)</td>
<td>16 (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement new teaching methods that meet students’ needs</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
<td>41 (38)</td>
<td>39 (36)</td>
<td>20 (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the needs of Special Education students</td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
<td>21 (19)</td>
<td>40 (37)</td>
<td>28 (26)</td>
<td>13 (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the needs of students with limited English proficiency</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>10 (9)</td>
<td>40 (37)</td>
<td>40 (37)</td>
<td>14 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, sense of preparedness in first year as a certified teacher</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>12 (11)</td>
<td>32 (30)</td>
<td>49 (45)</td>
<td>12 (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. VU=Very Unprepared, U= Unprepared, SU= Somewhat Unprepared, SP= Somewhat Prepared, P= Prepared, VP= Very Prepared. Percents were rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Content analysis was used to analyze the open-ended responses given in section 4 which dealt with the greatest strengths and weaknesses of their teacher preparation program (Holsti, 1968). The three most common strengths reported were meaningful field experiences, strong support from knowledgeable faculty, and great preparation in designing lesson plans. Firstly, respondents perceived field experiences as being beneficial. In addition to exposing students to actual classrooms, respondents stated that field experiences provided, “Internship-hands-on experience and great observation opportunities.” They also commented that “going to the school campus to observe-student teaching” and “seeing/experiencing firsthand an actual school environment” were very profitable. Fifty respondents referred to field experiences as being one of the greatest strengths of the educator preparation program.

A second theme that surfaced from the data involved the support and knowledge provided by the university professors. Respondents reported that they benefited from, “knowledgeable instructors” who shared “knowledge and personal experiences.” They also appreciated professors being, “… available when needed for support on situations”, “even without making appointments with them.” Professors were typically referred to as, “awesome and helpful, willing to provide information and encouragement to the teaching profession.” Forty-six respondents referred to the support and knowledge provided by university professors as being a significant strength of the educator preparation program.
A final theme that emerged from the data was that respondents felt prepared to create lesson plans. Participants typically reported that they had learned, “how to write lesson plans” and to do so for subjects “throughout the curriculum”. Thirty-four respondents referred to lesson planning as being one of the greatest strengths of their educator preparation program.

Two themes regarding the greatest weaknesses of the teacher preparation program from which the participants graduated emerged. Respondents reported that there was a great need for additional preparation in (a) classroom management and discipline, and (b) special education. Thirty-one participants stated that there was not enough information given in regards to classroom management and discipline. Respondents reported that they would have liked “special instruction for classroom management” and felt that there was “not enough preparation in classroom management”. Furthermore, they would have liked to have learned strategies on “how to deal with misbehaviors” and some type of “… training on discipline and how to handle discipline problems”.

Twenty-five of the individuals surveyed reported that greater attention needed to be given to special education in the educator preparation program. Some of the constructs that emerged included (a) a greater emphasis overall in special education, (b) behavior management of special education students, (c) inclusion, (d) the referral process, and (e) ways to address the needs of special education students. Participants typically reported that the “special education process needs to be emphasized a bit more” and “another special education course was needed”. In addition, participants did not feel that they had the “ability to work/teach/control special education students” and they were unsure as to “… how to include our special education students”. In addition, participants felt that the educator preparation program “…should teach how to fill out referral packets and how to modify” instruction for students with special needs.

A simple analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure was used to compare the differences in perceptions between the two groups of teachers involved in this study; i.e., those in their third year of teaching and those in their second year of teaching. Significant differences were found between the teachers with two years of teaching experience and those with three years of teaching experience in only three of the areas specifically examined by this research study. These differences are reported in Table 2.

Second-year teachers felt well prepared; however, third-year teachers perceived themselves to be prepared to maintain order in the classroom. When asked how prepared they felt in addressing the needs of special education students and of students with limited English proficiency, second-year teachers reported feeling significantly better prepared than the third-year teachers.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability to:</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 B. Maintain order in the classroom</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>1, 106</td>
<td>4.50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 F. Address the needs of Special Education students</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>1, 106</td>
<td>8.99**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 G. Address the needs of students with limited English proficiency</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1, 106</td>
<td>6.47**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.  M1=mean for participants in third year of teaching.  
M2=mean for participants in second year of teaching.  
*= p ≤ .05; **= p ≤ .01.
Since the probability values were more than .05, the results of the ANOVA indicated that no significant differences existed between the perceptions of the two groups on the remaining items. Specifically, those participants with two years of experience and those with three years of experience reported that they felt somewhat prepared in the following areas: (a) controlling misbehaviors that occur, (b) using student performance assessment techniques, and (c) implementing new methods of teaching that meet the identified needs of students in the classroom. The two groups indicated that they felt prepared in designing lesson plans that engage students in learning.

Discussion

Given the demographics of our local school districts, we were particularly surprised and troubled by the findings that only 50 percent felt prepared or very prepared to meet the needs of English language learners. Although our education majors do not have any difficulties communicating with the students in the local schools because of their functional abilities in Spanish, they do not necessarily feel confident in their abilities to help English language learners acquire the knowledge and skills specified in different content areas while continuing to acquire English as a second language. It is of critical importance that all of our graduates, not just the bilingual education majors, have the necessary skills to meet the needs of English language learners who represent the majority of students in local schools on the border.

In a similar vein, we are disturbed by the 62 % of beginning teachers who did not feel prepared to meet the needs of special education students. In light of recent research (Contreras, 2006) which demonstrated that English language learners are overrepresented in special education programs in Texas border regions, we believe these two issues are related. Therefore, we recognize that we must double our efforts to prepare our beginning teachers to address the needs of English language learners and special education students. As a result of these findings, faculty in the College of Education0 added a new course on second language acquisition which will required for all programs. This course will focus on issues in second language acquisition, and both theory and practice in teaching English as a Second Language through K-12 content areas. This course will provide all education majors with strategies for teaching English language learners through content area instruction. It will also have a field component in which students will be required to work one-on-one with an English language learner over the course of the semester.

We were encouraged by the finding that second year teachers felt more prepared than third year teachers to address the needs of second language learners because it served to validate a prior change in the program which increased the number of hours of field experience. When the third-year teachers were enrolled in the educator preparation program, only one of their preservice courses required a field component that consisted of 77 hours, and their student teaching experience consisted of nine weeks. After reflecting on the importance of field-based experiences, it was decided that a 40-hour field component should be added to the first course in the professional development sequence. The second course in the sequence continued to require 77 hours of field experience, and the student teaching semester was increased to 12 weeks.

Field experiences have been an important component of educator preparation programs. According to Paese (1989), “The field experience component has always been a vital part of teacher education programs” (p. 18). Field experiences function as a critical link between formal teacher training and apprenticeships. When new teachers are asked to choose the most valuable aspect of their preparation for teaching, they often point to their practical experiences (Richardson-Koehler, 1988). In a perfect world, we would be able to dramatically increase the number of courses and
field hours so as ensure that all our students were well prepared to face the challenges of frontera classrooms. However, the reality is that many of our students face their own twin challenges of time and finances as they work full-time jobs in order to be able to attend university in the first place.

**Future Research**

This study focused on exploring second and third-year frontera teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness to teach. Replication of this study could be conducted with teachers who have completed only one full year of teaching. A comparison could be made between the original respondents with two to three years of experience, and those with one full year of teaching experience. In this way, a profile of teachers with one, two, or three years of experience could be created. This characterization could assist educator preparation programs in designing their programs by providing data regarding the areas in which beginning teachers felt they were prepared. In addition, the profile could generate information regarding the impact that school districts have on beginning teachers.

Further studies could be conducted to compare the degree of teacher preparedness based on teachers’ level of certification, i.e., Early Childhood-4th grade, 4th -8th grade, 8th -12th grade. At present there were not enough beginning teachers in the area of 8-12 certification to provide a viable comparison with EC-4 and 4-8 teachers. However, in the future, these numbers may increase and lend themselves to further research. This type of study would provide a rich knowledge base as to how secondary teachers view their preparedness to teach when compared to those teachers who were prepared for the EC-4 or 4-8 certificates, since 8-12 certification majors are primarily prepared through the College of Arts and Sciences. It is also imperative that we study the degree of teacher preparedness of special education majors given the findings of this study. Unfortunately, numbers for this major continue to be fairly low.

A qualitative study with 3-4 of the teachers involved in the present study could be conducted to try to capture how elements such as administrative support, facilities, and resources may influence the success or failure of a beginning teacher. Beginning teachers could provide authentic details regarding the administrative assistance, resources, and facilities to which they had access. This study could provide information on the role that administration, school facilities, and available resources play with regard to beginning teachers’ decision to remain or leave the teaching profession.
References


APPENDIX A

SECOND- AND THIRD-YEAR TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the entire questionnaire (all five sections) and return it in the enclosed envelope. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

SECTION ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Was 2002-2003 the first academic year that you taught as a fully certified teacher?

   YES    NO

   1a. If NO, in what month and year did you first teach as a certified teacher? __________

2. How many years did you attend the university from which you graduated? _______years

3. Please circle the highest of these degrees that you currently hold.

   BA    BS    MA    MS    PhD    EdD

   Other (Specify) ________________________________

4. List the subjects that you are certified to teach.

   ____________________________________________________________

   Also indicate the grade levels for which your certificate/endorsement holds.

   ____________________________________________________________

5. What is your racial/ethnic background?

   African American _______   Asian/Pacific Islander _______   Caucasian _______

   Hispanic _______   Native American _______   Other (Specify) __________________

6. Do you speak or understand Spanish?

   YES    NO

SECTION TWO: CURRENT TEACHING ASSIGNMENT

5. What grade(s) are you currently teaching? Circle all that apply.

   PreK-3   PreK-4   GrK   Gr1   Gr2   Gr3   Gr4   Gr5   Gr6   Gr7   Gr8

   Gr9   Gr10   Gr11   Gr12

6. What subject(s) are you currently teaching? _______________________________________

7. Approximately how many miles away from your hometown is the town/city in which you are teaching? ______
8. On average, how many students do you have in a class? __________

9. Roughly what percentage of the students you teach can be classified as each of the following:
   - African American __________
   - Asian/Pacific Islander __________
   - Caucasian __________
   - Hispanic __________
   - Native American __________
   - Other (Specify) __________
   (NOTE: The numbers in question #9 should sum to 100%.)

10. Roughly what percentage of the students you teach have been classified as each of the following:
    - Bilingual __________
    - *English as a Second Language (ESL) __________
    - Special Education __________
    - *Limited English Proficient (LEP) __________
    - Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch __________

* ESL is a program of techniques, methodology and special curriculum designed to teach Limited English Proficient students English language skills, which may include listening, speaking, reading, writing, study skills, content vocabulary, and cultural orientation. ESL instruction is usually in English with little use of the students' native language.
* LEP Students are identified as limited English proficient by the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) according to criteria established in the Texas Administrative Code. Not all pupils identified as LEP receive bilingual or English as a second language instruction, although most do. Parental consent is required in order for students to participate in this program.

11. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the number of the label that best describes your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Parents support me in my efforts to educate their children.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The school administration supports me in my work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Experienced teachers at my school encourage me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Did you participate in an *induction program intended to support beginning teachers at any time during the past year?

   YES    NO

12a. If YES, who sponsored the program (check all that apply)?
   _____ School District/Campus  _____ Educational Service Center  _____ University  
   _____ Other (Specify) __________

12b. If YES, briefly explain why induction activities were, or were not, helpful to you. __________
* Involves ongoing, systematic training and support for new teachers beginning before the first day of school and continuing throughout the first two or three years of teaching.

SECTION THREE: TEACHING PREPAREDNESS

13. In your first year as a certified teacher, how prepared did you feel to perform each of the following activities? Please circle the number that corresponds to the label that best describes your feelings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very Unprepared</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>Very Prepared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design lesson plans that engage students in learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain order in the classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control misbehaviors that occur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use student performance assessment techniques</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement new methods of teaching that meet the identified needs of students in the classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the needs of Special Education students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the needs of students with limited English proficiency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how prepared did you feel in your first year as a certified teacher?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION FOUR: EVALUATION OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

14. Please describe what you believe to be the three greatest strengths and the three greatest weaknesses of the teacher preparation program from which you graduated.
   a. Greatest Strengths
   b. Greatest Weaknesses

SECTION FIVE: FUTURE PLANS

15. Do you plan to continue to teach during the next academic year? YES NO
   Please explain briefly why you responded this way. ________________________________

15a. If YES, approximately how many years do you estimate you will remain in the teaching profession? ______

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!