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# ANSWERING THE CALL TO PREPARE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AT INSTITUTIONS OF CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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*Concerns for social justice have called Catholics and others to be compassionate and supportive to children with disabilities by establishing schools and other learning opportunities to nurture this population. Special education as a field has developed over the past 40 years. This study examines the incidence, context, and nature of special education personnel preparation programs in institutions of Catholic higher education (ICHE). Through literature searches and web-based searches on the National Catholic College Admission Association website, a survey, and individual college websites, the study has identified 89 ICHE that offer special education degrees out of a total of 260 Catholic colleges and universities. Within the context of the demographics of ICHE, the results of this exploratory study show regional variation in special education degree programs; patterns of other education degree offerings that often occur with special education degrees, including undergraduate and graduate level degrees and dual certification; along with information about faculty, financial aid, accreditation, practicum sites, and relationships to Catholic schools. Recommendations are offered to strengthen special education personnel preparation in areas of need, including rural areas, and special education teachers who work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.*

The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for every Catholic university, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students. The Church is firmly committed to the integral growth of all men and women. The gospel, interpreted in the social teachings of the Church, is an urgent call to promote the development of those peoples who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance; of those who are looking for a wider share in the benefits of civilization

and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are aiming purposefully at their complete fulfillment. (John Paul II, 1990, §34)

## INTRODUCTION

The essence of special education personnel preparation is to teach future teachers to learn to respond on an individual basis to children who have limitations in their learning capacity or significant variations in the manner in which they process information and retain knowledge and/or act upon the world. Children with disabilities often suffer as much from the misunderstandings of those in their community and schools as from their own physical conditions and so, being an advocate for these children is often a part of the role of a special educator. Given the belief in the dignity of all life and the social justice mission shared by Catholic colleges and universities, special education is a field that calls institutions of Catholic higher education (ICHE) and others to be compassionate and supportive and to establish schools and other learning opportunities to nurture this population.

Special education is a field that has evolved over the past 40 years, yet the roots of involvement in services to persons with disabilities are much deeper and involve different groups within the Catholic Church. Table 1 depicts the evolution of special education over this period and the changing nature of issues in Catholic higher education over that same period. In terms of public policy, special education has a legal definition that “means specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents or guardians, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including classroom instruction, home instruction, and instruction in other settings such as hospitals and institutions” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 1997). The percentage of children who are identified as having special educational needs has grown over this time, from 1975 when IDEA (formerly called the Education for all Handicapped Children Act) was first implemented to the present (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2005b). The need for special education personnel has also grown over this time period and is recognized as a national area of need, along with teachers of math and science, because of current personnel shortages that exist in special education (Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, & Willig, 2002).

Table 1

*Comparative Look at Catholic Higher Education and Special Education Higher Education Over the Past 50 Years*

Decade	Trends in Catholic higher education	Trends in special education higher education
1950s	Post World War II growth in ICHE student population: Catholic identity was clear to all with rituals, habits, routines, transparency.	Special education not developed as a field; Civil Rights law became prominent and <i>Brown vs. Board of Education</i> (1954) found “separate was not equal.”
1960s	Higher education took on more professionalism and higher academic requirements.	Bureau of the Education of the Handicapped (BEH) formed in 1968 by the U.S. government.
1970s	Vatican II – ICHE had many creativities, freedoms, and initiatives versus a conservative view that the ICHE response to Vatican II was too freewheeling and led to a perception of a clash between universities and Catholic faith.	Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 requires special education services for children with disabilities, including FAPE. Funding granted for personnel preparation programs.
1980s	Questions of Catholic identity become prominent.	Expansion of programs for children from birth to age 21, increased funding for personnel preparation in special education.
1990s	<i>Ex Corde Ecclesiae</i> (1990) gives explicit rules and guidelines for ICHE to adopt and follow related to Catholic teachings and identity.	Inclusion grows. Private schools and parochial schools begin to receive benefits for children with special needs with reauthorization of IDEA in 1997.

Table 1 *continued*

Decade	Trends in Catholic higher education	Trends in special education higher education
2000s	<p>Still developing, providing an opportunity for ICHE to take a unique role.</p> <p>ICHE facing continuing declining presence of members of religious orders among faculty; Catholic schools serve increasing numbers of children with special needs.</p> <p>Catholic (and other) IHE face aging of faculty.</p> <p>More public accountability in IDEIA (2004) related to children parentally placed in private schools.</p>	<p>More variations in schooling offered, including federal and local funding for public charter schools.</p> <p>No Child Left Behind (2001) creates new rules and accountability impacts children with special needs.</p> <p>Private school choice and possibility of publicly funded vouchers supported by Supreme Court ruling (<i>Zelman v. Simmons-Harris</i>, 2002).</p> <p>Special education teacher shortages and fewer doctoral special educators being produced.</p> <p>Testimony at IDEIA Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Hearings, July 2005 from State Special Education administrators asking that private school personnel be certified.</p>

## CHANGING SPECIAL EDUCATION STANDARDS AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The recent reauthorization of IDEA in December 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) established the highly qualified standard for special education. Previously, this term had been promulgated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2001) for elementary and secondary school teachers. The provisions of NCLB for subject matter specialization and teachers in elementary schools apply to special education graduates if they have primary teaching responsibilities for children in the elementary area or subject matter for secondary education in addition to certification in special education. Thus, certain special education teachers will have to have dual certification in order to be able to teach. Special educators who have special education certification and who provide consultative services or co-teach with another teacher who has the primary subject matter certification, do not have to be dually certified. On the other hand,

special education teachers who teach the children who have alternate stakeholder annual assessments under NCLB (1-2% of the total population of all children), do not have to meet the regular NCLB elementary or secondary subject matter requirements, but must have special education certification. Further, teachers in this group must either pass a state test in the subject areas or basic elementary school curriculum or show that they have the competencies in particular subject or teaching areas through a state uniform standard of evaluation that covers two or more areas. Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the “high objective uniform state standard of evaluation” (HOUSSE) is a key component to the highly qualified teacher definition. Veteran teachers may have only to demonstrate competencies on the HOUSSE state devised standard (IDEIA, 2004). While these requirements do not apply to Catholic school special educators, they are likely to be addressed in the professional standards for the special education personnel preparation community.

Given the pressing needs for providing special education teachers, the urge to articulate a Catholic identity, and the ICHE goal to promote a social justice mission that corresponds closely to trends in the development of a field to educate and nurture all children, one would expect to find a substantial commitment to special education amongst ICHE. This expectation is borne out by the identification of the offering of a special education degree program at over one third of all ICHE and at over one half of all ICHE offering general education degree programs. This paper examines the pattern of special education offerings in ICHE in the context of the continuum of Catholic education as well as the national picture of special education and offers recommendations for future development of related programs.

Overall, Table 1 shows two evolving histories that are quite distinct from one another; Catholic higher education thrived after World War II, thanks in part to the GI bill that provided tuition support for returning veterans (O’Brien, 2002). This growth produced more scrutiny on Catholic higher education’s academic offerings; as a result, ICHE grew in their ability to meet high standards in the area of academic excellence (Hellwig, 2001). Special education, as a field and as an area of personnel preparation, was just in its infancy at that time. The Civil Rights movement, with the key decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, making it illegal to provide separate education to children because of race, established an indirect path that with subsequent decisions and new laws, created the context for the education of children with disabilities to be considered as a right. In 1975, the Education of the Handicapped Act, now called IDEIA, was passed and required the provision of free appropriate education (FAPE) for all children with special education needs. Several reauthorizations of that law have

brought enhancements such as funds for supporting activities, including personnel preparation in special education. Shriver (2003) has noted a growing trend of shortages of doctoral level special educators to teach and direct special education programs. ICHE, over the last decade, have been conscious of the need to demonstrate a unique Catholic identity.

More recently, there is evidence of some convergence between public and private education coordination as school choices expand and demonstration projects of voucher programs that allow children to go to private schools with public funding are tested (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Further, children with disabilities in private schools are also being included in new public policies and in educational opportunities at an increasing, though not sufficient rate (USCCB, 2002). New guidelines related to education for children with disabilities in private schools are also bringing attention to the issue of the qualifications of teachers who teach these children. State special education administrators, who have responsibility for statewide oversight of children with special education needs, would like to see personnel standards for special education teachers apply to all teachers serving these children, whether they are in public or private schools (OSEP, 2005a). Therefore, it is timely and relevant to investigate special education teacher preparation practices in ICHE.

While there is a journal devoted to the study of teacher education and personnel preparation, *TEACHING Exceptional Children* (Council for Exceptional Children), as well as Catholic higher education, *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* (Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities), and there is a literature related to children with special needs and Catholic schools (USCCB, 2002), the authors were not able to locate any prior study of special education personnel preparation programs in institutions of Catholic higher education. Thus, this paper is an exploratory and descriptive study that examines the incidence, context, and nature of special education personnel preparation programs in ICHE.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the pattern (i.e., incidence, context, and nature) of education offerings in ICHE?
  - How many ICHE exist?
  - Who attends ICHE?
  - How many ICHE offer education degrees?
  - What is the nature of their programs?
- What is the pattern (i.e., incidence, context, and nature) of special education offerings in ICHE?
  - How does special education personnel preparation in ICHE respond to

needs in Catholic schools and public schools?

- How do the special education personnel preparation patterns of ICHE compare to national patterns?

## **WHAT THIS STUDY IS NOT ABOUT**

This survey is not about teacher quality in special education personnel preparation programs in ICHE. Questions related to the preservice programs' particular qualitative program aspects and other issues that pertain to teacher quality, such as retention of students once in the workplace, state and local policies, and opportunities for ongoing professional development, would be worthy topics for study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper is an exploratory descriptive study of the incidence, context, and nature of special education personnel preparation programs in ICHE. It examines the pattern of special education offerings in ICHE in the context of the continuum of Catholic education as well as a national picture of special education and offers recommendations for future development of related programs. The data collection process included informational strategies at several levels, including the utilization of established websites, a survey of individual ICHE, examination of their individual websites, and ultimately, communication via telephone and email.

An examination of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU; 2005) website revealed a list of ICHE, which indicated the religious orders that sponsor each institution. In addition, the site provided links to an extensive publication list. One such publication (Pettit, 2004) provided extensive demographic data about 260 ICHE. That list provided the basis for our baseline understanding about ICHE, including student demographics and Carnegie codes for each institution. The information regarding religious orders and Carnegie codes was later added to a database.

Pettit's (2004) study did not separate out which institutions offered education or special education programs. Thus, a new approach was needed. In an attempt to identify the institutions that offer academic programs in education, the National Catholic College Admission Association (NCCAA; 2005) website, which maintains a list of member Catholic colleges and universities, was employed. The NCCAA webpage is geared toward prospective students, who are able to search for a Catholic institution by indicating the size, setting, region, and academic program of their choice. The site then generates a listing of Catholic institutions that fit the parameters of the search. The listing further provides both links to summative web pages called quick school

profiles for each of the ICHE as well as links to each institution's individual websites. The summative web pages contain a uniform set of data for each of the ICHE, including the institution's name, address, admissions office contact information, size, region, level of selectivity, tuition and fees, academic programs, and areas of specialization (e.g., education: special education, elementary education, secondary education).

A search of the NCCAA (2005) website for ICHE that offer academic programs in education (for the fields of size, region, and setting, "any" was selected) yielded a list of 149 institutions. The summative web pages for all 149 ICHE were examined and the data recorded. Data for the following factors was entered into SPSS (Green & Salkind, 2005) for all 149 ICHE: region; selectivity; level of degrees offered; Carnegie codes; religious order sponsorship; special education degrees (education degrees co-offered: elementary education, secondary education, science education, art education, Spanish education, physical education); size; tuition.

The summative webpage online search revealed that 88 ICHE offer a specialization in special education. Data from the summative webpages were first analyzed to compare the nature and context of 61 institutions that provide education but do not provide special education with the 88 institutions that do provide education programs and special education programs.

A second step was needed to locate sources in order to find additional information about their special education programs. While the summative web pages provided contact information for each of the ICHE admissions office, it did not provide contact information for individual departments or programs. Therefore, a search of all 149 websites to obtain contact information for an individual within each respective department or program of education was conducted. An attempt was made to identify the coordinator of special education, after which the department chair or dean was identified. If it was not possible to identify any one of these, the most senior special education faculty member was identified. His or her contact information was then recorded on the database.

A survey, and accompanying cover letter, was designed for the purpose of collecting further specific programmatic information not available through online resources from each of the ICHE. The survey, in both Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat formats, was initially forwarded to each of the 149 institutions on the NCCAA (2005) list. A response was requested within 2 weeks by email, fax, or mail. As survey responses were received, those data were entered into the database. In order to achieve a higher response rate, a second distribution of the survey and letter was made after 4 weeks had lapsed. However, this time the survey was administered to the 88



institutions, identified through the NCCAA (2005) website, that offer programs in special education and two additional institutions that were known to the authors to offer special education. A secondary analysis of the original list of 88 showed that two of these ICHE were linked institutionally; thus, it was appropriate to combine their data, bringing the new total of 90 programs down to 89. A total of 42 surveys were received, including 10 from institutions that do not offer programs in special education, which are not reported in this paper due to the low response rate from non-special education ICHE. Of the 89 ICHE offering programs in special education, 32 surveys were received, constituting a response rate of 36%. See the Appendix for a list of the 89 ICHE.

In order to obtain programmatic information for the remaining 57 institutions offering programs in special education, a search of the websites for each remaining institution was conducted. Any information that could not be discerned from the website was redirected to the identified contact person at the ICHE, either by telephone or email. All survey, website, and interview data were recorded. The database was then imported into an SPSS file. The SPSS program ran frequencies and percentages of selected items. Cross-tabulations of data for non-ICHE and ICHE status were run. Analysis was limited to descriptive statistical methods, conducted in order to identify patterns and trends within data.

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

The ICHE survey attempted to gather additional programmatic information about each ICHE program in education and special education. It contained 10 multiple choice and short answer questions, including items regarding the institution's accreditation, student demographics, availability and type of student field experiences, type of financial support available, faculty demographics, areas of teacher certification, post-graduation employment, and degrees offered.

## **RESULTS**

### **PATTERN OF EDUCATION OFFERINGS IN ICHE**

#### **How Many ICHE Exist? Who Attends ICHE?**

A recent study (Pettit, 2004) of the enrollment patterns of 260 ICHE in the United States portrays an academic community that is growing at a higher rate than higher education as a whole but slower than its counterparts in private institutions of higher education. The demographics of the enrollment patterns distinguish the ICHE from their private counterparts in particular ways: the percentage of women enrolled was 62%, an 8% gain between the period

from 1980 to 2000. Private institutions of higher education (IHE) also increased the percentage of women by 8%, ending with 54%. These numbers are somewhat reflective of, but higher than, national trends in gender enrollment patterns, where in the years 2002 and 2003, 57.5% of all Bachelor degrees were awarded to women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). In addition, the diversity in race, ethnicity, and citizenship also increased over the 2 decade period from 16.5% to 26%; however private institutions grew more, from 17.4% to 30.7%. The pattern of full-time undergraduate enrollment remained around 66% (less than other private institutions); however, a higher number of graduate and first-professional enrollment was seen in ICHE (i.e., 3.8% greater than other private institutions; Petitt, 2004).

### **How Many ICHE Offer Education Degrees?**

The number of ICHE offering education degrees according to the National Catholic College Admission Association website is 149; these were revealed by requesting an inquiry on the site. Watzke (2005) reported that there are about 170 ICHE offering teacher preparation in the country. Thus, we can expect the number arrived at in this study may be an underestimate.

### **INTERIM DATA SUMMARY (PRE-SURVEY)**

For the interim data search, data were gathered from both the pool of 88 ICHE that initially were found providing special education degree data and from all 149 ICHE that offer education degrees. Data percentages and frequencies were compared between the institutions offering special education and those offering only education degrees.

### **What is the Nature of Their Programs? Degrees Offered?**

Non-special education ICHE were more likely to offer the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in education than their special education degree program counterparts. Eighty-seven percent of non-special education ICHE offer BA degrees while 83% of special education ICHE offer BA degrees. The reverse was true for the Master of Arts (MA) degree; 80% of special education ICHE offer MA degrees compared to 77% of non-special education ICHE. In terms of doctoral degrees, 18% of non-special education ICHE offer doctoral degrees, while 23% of special education ICHE offer doctoral programs. The findings from the initial web search show that ICHE that offer special education are also more likely to offer more advanced graduate coursework and degree programs.

### **Carnegie Codes Analysis**

Analysis of the institutions and their Carnegie code designations show that institutions that offer a Master's degree for the entire institution are twice as

likely to offer special education degree programs (33 ICHE did not offer the MA or special education while 65 ICHE did offer both). These data are from Carnegie codes numbers 21 and 22. Further, none of the 149 ICHE that offered education programs were strictly teachers' colleges, according to their Carnegie Codes.

### **Selectivity**

The selectivity item was based on information placed on the National Catholic College Admissions Association website and represented an institution wide designation; thus the authors did not judge selectivity. A Likert scale was used to portray the range of selectivity choices, with 0 meaning *open admission* and 4 being *very selective*. Sixty-nine percent of the total ICHE population rated as being 2 or *moderately selective*. Forty-four or half (50%) of the total population of special education ICHE were *moderately selective* as contrasted to 25 *moderately selective* ratings out of 61 for the non-special education ICHE (41%). Twenty-seven percent of the special education ICHE were *selective* in admissions; whereas 37% of the non-special education ICHE were found to be *selective*.

Overall, the institutions offering special education were less selective than institutions that did not offer special education. A total selectivity score was calculated by adding up the selectivity values of each institution according to their Likert scale (0-4) score and determining the average. The total mean score for non-special education ICHE was 2.18 (slightly over *moderately selective*) and for special education ICHE, 1.18 (somewhat below *moderately selective*).

### **Relationship of Special Education Degrees to Other Degrees**

Information was collected to determine what circumstances or conditions make it likely that an ICHE offers special education. The possibility of dual certification requirements and the possibility of students choosing to major in two areas would be impacted by trends in the pattern of subject matter that degrees are offered in. This question has particular relevance. Table 2 presents the percentage of ICHE offering special education that also offer the designated degrees listed below.

Table 2

*Percentage of ICHE That Offer a Special Education Degree in Addition to Other Additional Education Degrees*

Degree	Percentage of ICHE
Elementary education	97.7%
Secondary education	94.3%
Science education	61.4%
Early childhood education	57.9%
Art education	45.5%
Spanish education	34.1%
Physical education	30.7%

These data portray the likelihood that the majority of institutions that offer special education have the capacity to offer the possibility of dual certification in special education and either elementary education, secondary education, science education, or early childhood education. Theoretically, art education, Spanish education, and physical education could be dual certification areas as well; however, given these data, it appears that these situations may be less likely. The areas of art education (37.6%), Spanish education (32.3%), and physical education (24.5%) majors seem to be poorly represented majors in all of the ICHE that offer education degree programs. The ACCU (2005) website data did not depict the number of institutions that offered English as a second language (ESL) as a major, so this question was added to the survey to be discussed below.

### **Settings Where Special Education is Offered**

Over half of the ICHE that offer education degrees are in suburban settings (52.3%), with about a third in urban settings (33.5%), and fewer in rural settings (14.4%). Within the subset of special education ICHE, it was determined to have the following demographic breakdown: urban, 60%; suburban, 60%; rural, 4%.

Therefore, while there is a wide difference between urban, suburban, and rural settings in terms of the number of ICHE offering education degrees within each region, there is little difference in the rate per institution that spe-

cial education degrees are offered, with rural being the lowest.

Comparing these data to national special education data, one sees that there is a similar pattern: the Mid-Atlantic, New England, and the Midwest seem more sophisticated in terms of their capacity to prepare special education teachers (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Regional Distribution of all Public and Private National Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) in Education and Special Education*

Region	Percentage of IHE that offer education degree	Percentage of special education IHE as a subset of education IHE
Mid-Atlantic	33.5%	72%
Midwest	34.8%	65%
Mountain	2%	33.3%
New England	10%	40%
South	4.7%	42.8%
Southeast	2.7%	25%
Southwest	4%	33.3%
West	8%	41.6%

*Note.* Source: (Carlson et al., 2002)

These figures show a wide variation among IHE offering education degrees across the eight geographical regions. Two regions of the country have 68% of all IHE offering education degrees in the country. The majority of IHE in these regions offer special education degrees.

### **Demographics**

The low numbers of multicultural student population of ICHE contrast with the high multicultural child population in Catholic schools, particularly in urban areas. This is also true for public schools, and particularly true for both schools with the special educational needs population (OSEP, 2005b).

Analysis of the range of countries represented in the ICHE offering special education found little difference among institutions with and without special education programs.

## **PATTERN OF SPECIAL EDUCATION OFFERINGS IN ICHE**

### **Findings From Special Education Higher Education Survey**

From the original 88 ICHE identified with special education programs from the NCCAA (2005) website, two additional ICHE were added based upon the authors' personal knowledge of their programs and one ICHE was removed from the list because it was a duplicate of another ICHE. These institutions are linked. Surveys from 32 institutions were received for a 36% return rate. Websites for the remaining ICHE yielded data on a number of items on the survey's 41 institutions (46%). Some data were ultimately collected by phone. For some items on the survey, we have a complete data set, but not for others.

### ***Organizational Location Within ICHE***

ICHE differed regarding the institutional structure and departmental location of their special education programs. Of the special education programs, 14.6% are located in a department of education, 34.8% are in a school of education, 29.2% were a part of a school of arts and sciences, and an additional 2.2 % in a different arts and sciences unit. The remaining 14.6% are located in another organizational unit within their university.

### ***Accreditation***

The majority of programs surveyed were accredited (76.4%). Only 2.2% indicated a lack of accreditation. The remaining 21.4% went unreported.

### ***Tuition Support***

The largest amount of tuition support comes from federal funds (89.9%), with the majority of this amount representing federal loan programs. Of the ICHE, 85.4% reported state tuition support for students at their institution, and 69.7% reported receiving tuition support from foundations. In terms of offering discounted tuition, 22.5% reported discounted tuition rates, but only 15.7% had an agreement with the Catholic schools related to discounted tuition rates.

### ***Dual Certification***

In regard to certification requirements, 41.6% reported that they require students to be dually certified, 25.8% reported that they do not require dual certification, and 35.5% did not respond to the question. This may be an artifact that this kind of information may not be contained on most websites.

### ***Employment After Graduation***

It appears that the programs do not have data regarding where all of their

teachers eventually go to work. Data are missing or were purposefully left blank for 76.4% of the responses to the question about the number of teachers who went on to teach in Catholic schools, with the remaining 23.6% reporting that graduates did go on to teach in Catholic schools. While 79.7% did not respond to the same question posed for the number of teachers who went on to teach in public schools, the remaining 20.3% reported that teachers did go on to teach in public schools. Clearly, there is a need for all of the special education personnel preparation programs to collect those data for their own quality assurance questions. The high number of non-respondents to this question should lead readers to view the results as weak since it is probable that accurate data were not available to the respondents. One respondent commented that there are not good special education positions in the Catholic schools in their area, so that special education graduates are more likely to go to public school positions. This information will be useful in the formulation of recommendations from this study.

### ***Practicum and Field Placements***

The percentages in Table 4 were reported related to the utilization of different kinds of student placement sites.

Table 4

*Placement Sites for Students in ICHE with Special Education Programs*

Student placement sites	Percentage of ICHE
Child development center	40.4%
Lab school	34.8%
Professional development school	48.3%
Catholic school	53.9%
Other	22.5%

In this context, there appears to be an active relationship between the personnel preparation programs and Catholic schools as indicated by the majority of the ICHE in special education indicating that they use Catholic school field placements. More than one category might have been picked by any respondents.

### ***Other Degree Programs***

The institutions with special education degree programs have other degrees which may be complementary to the special education degree. There may be coursework that is overlapping for some degree programs. In addition, we also now know that in at least 41.6% of these programs, dual certification (i.e., special education plus another content specialty) is required. The information in Table 5 is based upon the survey and ICHE website information found online.

Table 5

*Additional Academic Programs at ICHE*

Degree	A.A.	B.A.	M.A.	Ph.D.
Early childhood education	5.6 %	41.6%	15.7%	--
Elementary education	1.1%	89.6 %	26.8%	1.1%
Secondary education	1.1%	78.4%	26.8%	--
English education	--	28%	6%	--
Science education	--	30.1%	5.4%	--
Spanish education	--	18.3%	2.2%	--
English as a second language	--	3.4%	10.1%	1.1%
Special education	1.1%	68.5%	55%	1.1%

### ***Data on Scholarship and Region***

Special education personnel programs appear to be high users of scholarship support. A secondary analysis of settings (i.e., urban, suburban, and rural) shows that rural areas, though fewer in number, are higher users of federal, foundation, and state monies for scholarships. Rural areas are also unlikely to be users of discounted tuition rates or Catholic schools' agreements relat-



ed to discounted tuition. In an analysis of accreditation by scholarship usage, the highest correlation was found for the use of federal funds and accreditation status (64 institutions out of 93) with state scholarship funds and accreditation status trailing slightly (i.e., 60 institutions out of 93 were both accredited and users of state scholarship funds).

### ***Student Enrollment***

Neither the responses to the survey nor the information on the websites was sufficient to address the questions on the survey regarding student enrollment. No data were available on the numbers of graduate students for 87.5% of the institutions or 84.4% of the undergraduates at these institutions.

### ***Relationship of the Catholic Elementary School and the ICHE***

A study of inner city Catholic elementary schools found that 44% of teachers attended Catholic elementary schools and 23.2% attended a Catholic college (O'Keefe, 1997). In that study, while 96% of students in Catholic schools were Catholic, 83.9% of teachers were Catholic. Of particular interest are the data showing that the student population in Catholic schools is much more diverse than the staff population (38.3% White for children vs. 74.7% White for teachers; 30% Black for children vs. 14.4% Black for teachers; 24.3% Hispanic for children vs. 8.3% Hispanic for teachers). Moreover, 5% of children were noted to have limited English proficiency.

The Catholic school response in this area was seen with 41 out of 307 schools having ESL classes, and 28 out of 307 schools having bilingual education.

O'Keefe (1997) also reported that 3.8% of children in Catholic schools have a diagnosed learning disability with 48 schools out of 307 reporting that they have specific classes for the learning disabled. In 1994-1995, 2% of the population withdrew because needed special education services were available elsewhere.

Further, O'Keefe (1997) also reported that 22.1% of Catholic elementary schools had an affiliation with a Catholic college or university and 16.9% with a non-Catholic university. Others have written of indications of lessened utilization of Catholic schools by ICHE for practicum placements (Watzke, 2005) and related issues. The majority of special education personnel preparation programs in the ICHE in this study did indicate that they had practicum placements in Catholic schools. It appears that some links are durable between the ICHE and their Catholic school counterparts and other links need to be fostered.

## **ICHE SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL PREPARATION PATTERNS COMPARED TO NATIONAL PATTERNS**

### **What is the National Standard for Personnel Preparation in Special Education?**

The information below was retrieved as part of a web search at the National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Services Support at the National Association for State Directors of Special Education (2005). A national study of special education teachers in public schools found differences in special education teacher confidence, self-efficacy, certification, years of teaching, and other issues varying by geographical region (Carlson et al., 2002). The Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPENSE) investigated several measures that relate to personnel competencies. They asked special education teachers to report on their self-confidence and self-efficacy in their roles. Teachers in Western regions were more confident about their skills than teachers in other areas. In terms of self-efficacy, those in the Northwest were more confident and felt that they had enough experience to deal with their students' special needs. Special education teachers in rural areas were lowest in both of these measures.

In terms of certification status, while a higher percentage of general educators (95%) were appropriately credentialed, as compared to special educators (92%), special educators were more likely to have a Master's degree (59%) than general education teachers (49%). This finding corresponds to the pattern found in this study whereby ICHE that offer MA degrees in special education outnumber ICHE that offer BA degrees in special education.

"Only 71 percent of beginning special education teachers, those with less than 3 years of teaching experience, were certified for their main assignment" (Carlson et al., 2002, p. 2). Another factor that entered into the equation was the categorical area where a teacher might be certified; for example, special education teachers teaching children with emotional disturbances were less likely to be certified than some other areas (Carlson et al., 2002). This reflects the teacher shortage that enables teachers to work before becoming certified.

### **Regional Differences in Special Education Service Delivery and Personnel**

Differences in certification status were noted in the particular region where special education teachers taught, although the difference was not significant statistically. Some indicators of special educator certification success by region are listed in Table 6.

Table 6

*Certification of Special Educators by Region*

Region	Percentage certified	Percentage tested	Percentage taking test more than once
Southeast	3%	--	19%
Great Lakes	93%	--	--
Mountain Plains	91%	--	16%
Mid-South	90 %	78%	16%
West	84%	--	25%
Northeast	13%	--	--
Average	--	58%	17%

Teachers in rural areas were more likely (21%) to retake the test than those in suburban (15%) and urban (19%) areas (Carlson et al., 2002). Another finding was that special education teachers had fewer years of experience than general education teachers on average (i.e., 14.3 years vs. 15.5 years) and that there was also a variation in experience among special education teachers by region. In urban areas, the average length of experience was 15.2 years, while in suburban areas it was 13.8 years and in rural areas, 14.0 years (Carlson et al., 2002).

Years of experience among special education teachers also varied by geographic region, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7

*Years of Experience of Special Education Teachers by Region*

Region	Years of experience
Southeast	13.6
Great Lakes	15.1
Mountain Plains	13.9
Mid-South	13.8
West	13.2
Northeast	15.5

Regionally urban and suburban special education teachers reported being better prepared than rural special educators (Carlson et al., 2002).

### **Cultural Issues**

Nationally, 24% of children in special education teachers' classrooms were from culturally or linguistically diverse groups. Practices with this population did not vary by region. However, this was one of three topics that special education teachers reported that they needed to know more about. The other areas were technology as an instructional tool and reading the professional literature. Fifty-one percent report their preservice preparation was lacking in this area. When field experiences had led to more interaction with culturally and linguistically diverse students, the outcome was more favorable (Carlson et al., 2002). The need to place more emphasis on preparing personnel to work with culturally diverse children, enhances the needs of Catholic school special education personnel preparation programs.

### **Routes to Certification**

Graduates of fifth year programs (5%) and continuing professional development programs (10%) had the highest teacher quality scores. The second highest were graduates of Master's programs (41%); the third highest were graduates of Bachelor's programs (37%). The lowest scores were from graduates of alternative certification programs (7%; Carlson et al., 2002).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It would be helpful if education departments had data readily available related to the numbers of special education teacher candidates as well as others who move into teaching positions in Catholic schools. This baseline information could be useful for devising steps that might be undertaken to increase the numbers of special education graduates who choose this path or are able to find jobs in Catholic schools.

Special education as an activity within Catholic schools should be fostered if special education personnel are going to thrive and be successful. Faculty and others are encouraged to take an active advocacy role to ensure that children with disabilities in Catholic schools receive the benefits of special education and especially Child Find, a publicly funded special education function to which all children are entitled. Being referred to Child Find and receiving screening and evaluation services, not only helps children directly, but it ensures that children are counted. This helps with other funding, though small. Advocacy is also needed to ensure that the overall public expenditure for special education services for all children rises to levels promised by Congress. When this happens at a federal level, children in private schools also benefit based upon current practice. Both of these activities can help bring in additional resources for children to enable more parents who wish for their children to attend private Catholic schools to exercise that option.

The subject of linguistic and cultural diversity comes up in many contexts with a pattern of increasing child diversity in Catholic schools, low teacher diversity in Catholic schools, low student diversity in Catholic universities, and low teacher diversity in national special education personnel. We recommend that ICHE take the data to heart and intentionally work to increase their culturally diverse student population so that it begins to approximate the percentages of children in Catholic schools and national and/or regional norms. This incidence is likely to be even higher for children with disabilities based upon the overall trends for children with disabilities to have a higher representation of minorities (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). The issue of linguistic diversity is especially important due to the increasing numbers of Hispanic families whose children attend Catholic schools and for whom English is a second language. ESL children may have a disability, particularly when it comes to learning to read, but too often these children are perceived as having a disability when the core issue is a language difference (Tabors & Snow, 2003). Based upon our survey of institutions where special education is offered, it is apparent that few programs are being offered to prepare educators specifically for this population. This is an area that expansion of programs might prove beneficial to all.

Programs and resources to prepare special education teachers in rural

areas appear to be under represented in the special education personnel preparation/ICHE sphere of activity. Partnerships between ICHE in conjunction with distance learning options could be used to address these needs.

There are many different routes to special education certification. In the past, categorical areas were the major area of consideration. This information is of importance to ICHE who are for the most part, accredited by the state in which they are located. Also, the multiple paths to special education certification, especially dual certification, create new responsibilities for faculty who are preparing special educators. Further, different routes to certification as they affect teacher quality should also be considered. The unique strengths and mission orientation of Catholic school teachers is certainly one important avenue to consider as ICHE construct programs for children with special needs (Barber, 1992).

In summary, over one third of the ICHE community is providing a special education personnel program that helps to promote social justice for children and their families both within the private and public school contexts. This is a benchmark of which to be proud. However, given the need of children with disabilities to have the choice to attend Catholic schools and the increasing number of children in Catholic schools coming from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, coupled with the national shortages in special education personnel, it is clear that much more could be done to meet the current and potential market for special education personnel.

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## Appendix

*Institutions of Catholic Higher Education (ICHE) That Offer  
Academic Programs in Special Education*

	Name of ICHE	Address of ICHE	
1	Alvernia College	Reading	PA
2	Aquinas College	Grand Rapids	MI
3	Assumption College	Worcester	MA
4	Avila University	Kansas City	MO
5	Bellarmino University	Louisville	KY
6	Boston College	Chestnut Hill	MA
7	Brescia University	Owensboro	KY
8	Cabrini College	Radnor	PA
9	Canisius College	Buffalo	NY
10	Cardinal Strich University	Milwaukee	WI
11	Carlow University	Pittsburgh	PA
12	Clarke College	Dubuque	IA
13	College of Mount Saint Vincent	Riverdale	NY
14	College of Mount St. Joseph	Cincinnati	OH
15	College of Saint Elizabeth	Morristown	NJ
16	College of Saint Rose	Albany	NY
17	Creighton University	Omaha	NE
18	D'Youville College	Buffalo	NY
19	DePaul University	Chicago	IL
20	DeSales University	Center Valley	PA
21	Edgewood College	Madison	WI
22	Elms College	Chicopee	MA
23	Felician College	Lodi	NJ
24	Fontbonne University	St. Louis	MO
25	Franciscan University of Steubenville	Steubenville	OH
26	Gannon University	Erie	PA
27	Georgian Court University	Lakewood	NJ
28	Gonzaga University	Spokane	WA
29	Gwynedd-Mercy College	Gwynedd Valley	PA



## Appendix (continued)

	Name of ICHE	Address of ICHE	
30	Holy Family University	Philadelphia	PA
31	Immaculata University	Immaculata	PA
32	King's College	Wilkes-Barre	PA
33	La Salle University	Philadelphia	PA
34	LeMoyne College	Syracuse	NY
35	Lewis University	Romeoville	IL
36	Loras College	Dubuque	IA
37	Loyola College in Maryland	Baltimore	MD
38	Loyola University Chicago	Chicago	IL
39	Madonna University	Livonia	MI
40	Manhattan College	Riverdale	NY
41	Marian College	Indianapolis	IN
42	Marist College	Poughkeepsie	NY
43	Marymount University	Arlington	VA
44	Marywood University	Scranton	PA
45	Malloy College	Rockville Centre	NY
46	Mount Marty College	Yankton	SD
47	Mount Mercy College	Cedar Rapids	IA
48	Mount Saint Mary College	Newburgh	NY
49	Mount St. Mary's College	Los Angeles	CA
50	Nazareth College	Rochester	NY
51	Niagara University	Niagara University	NY
52	Notre Dame de Namur University	Belmont	CA
53	Our Lady of the Lake University	San Antonio	TX
54	Providence College	Providence	RI
55	Quincy University	Quincy	IL
56	Rivier College	Nashua	NH
57	Saint Francis University	Loretto	PA
58	Saint John Fisher College	Rochester	NY
59	Saint Joseph College	Brooklyn Heights	NY
60	Saint Joseph's University	Philadelphia	PA

## Appendix (continued)

	Name of ICHE	Address of ICHE	
61	Saint Louis University	St. Louis	MO
62	Saint Martin's College	Olympia	WA
63	Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College	Mary-of-the-Woods	IN
64	Saint Mary's College of California	Moraga	CA
65	Saint Xavier University	Chicago	IL
66	Salve Regina University	Newport	RI
67	Santa Clara University	Santa Clara	CA
68	Seton Hall University	South Orange	NJ
69	Seton Hill University	Greensburg	PA
70	Silver Lake College	Manitowoc	WI
71	St. Ambrose University	Davenport	IA
72	St. Bonaventure University	St. Bonaventure	NY
73	St. John's University	Queens	NY
74	St. Thomas Aquinas College	Santa Paula	CA
75	The Catholic University of America	Washington	DC
76	The College of New Rochelle	New Rochelle	NY
77	The University of Scranton	Scranton	PA
78	Trinity University	Washington	DC
79	University of Dayton	Dayton	OH
80	University of Detroit Mercy	Detroit	MI
81	University of Great Falls	Great Falls	MT
82	University of Saint Francis	Fort Wayne	IN
83	University of Saint Thomas	St. Paul	MN
84	University of San Francisco	San Francisco	CA
85	Ursuline College	Pepper Pike	OH
86	Walsh University	North Canton	OH
87	Wheeling Jesuit University	Wheeling	WV
88	Xavier University	Cincinnati	OH
89	Xavier University of Louisiana	New Orleans	LA