PREPARING K-12 TEACHERS FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION

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This quantitative study reports on the preparation of teachers for the online environment. Data were collected from a survey of current K-12 online teachers (n=395) across the United States. Results showed teachers felt prepared to meet the iNACOL Standards for Online Teaching. The study also established the standards are reflective of the necessary skills for online teachers. Findings from the study revealed there is no correlation between years of classroom teaching experience and perceived preparation to meet the standards, nor is there evidence to show a specific type of teacher preparation program resulted in teachers who felt more prepared to meet the standards.
Dedication

To my husband, Zeb, for the support and encouragement as I worked to achieve this goal.

To my children, Zeb and Lina… may you know that you are loved and I will always be your biggest supporter, as you have been mine.

“… With God all things are possible.”

~Matthew 19:26
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CHAPTER I

My interest in online education is still a relatively new part of my life. I attended a traditional public school in a small town from kindergarten through grade twelve, graduating in 2002. During those years, there were only two alternative schooling options I was aware of: a private Christian school and homeschooling. As I pursued my teaching degree as my undergraduate focus in college I began to hear more about charter schools, explained as schools that were run by organizations taking money from traditional districts. The feeling I gleaned was that charter schools were an educational problem and certainly not a solution. Once finished with college and looking for a full time job, I found the Ohio education market daunting. I applied to many schools across the state with no employment success until I was presented with an opportunity from a statewide, public, online, charter school in 2006. I was hesitant at first, not sure how that would work or if I even wanted to find out. However, I gave it a try and eventually began to love it. I was finally able to experience firsthand how charter schools worked, what online education had to offer students and families, and what it was like to be a virtual teacher. This is not to say that being a virtual teacher is without its own set of unique challenges. As explained by Rice (2012), online teaching is not for everyone, it is not easier than traditional classroom teaching, and being a good classroom teacher does not make one a good online teacher.

The support offered as I started my career was most prevalent from colleagues who had been with the school longer than I had. I continued to grow as a teacher by collaborating, attending outside professional development that could be modified and applied in our setting, and reflecting on myself, my approaches, and the feedback I
collected from the parents and students I worked with. As the school has grown and become more sophisticated we have seen an increase in the structured professional development offered by the management organization, increased support from veteran employees for new staff, and enhanced and expanded online training modules. As I grew professionally within the company, taking on leadership roles and in 2010 an administrative role, I began participating in the teacher search and hiring processes. It was at this time that I started to focus on what made a good teacher in the online environment. What skills and qualifications did we need candidates to be prepared with to find success in the virtual classroom? My interest in the preparation of teachers for the online environment continued to grow as I hired successful and unsuccessful virtual teachers. In reviewing candidates, I questioned past experience, preparation program approaches, personal qualities, content knowledge, and professional abilities. During this process I also began to question if we knew what we really needed from our candidates. The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) (2011) established a standard set of guidelines, divided into what online teachers should know and what they should be able to do. As a former online teacher and current online administrator I developed a vested interest in learning more about the preparation of teachers for these standards and their application in the online teaching environment.

**Statement of the Problem**

During the 2012-2013 school year the number of students served by multi-district fulltime online schools rose to approximately 310,000 across 30 states (Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin, & Rapp, 2013). In addition to these students, there were approximately 1,816,400 district reported students enrolled in a distance education course, and 90% of
the districts using distance education courses were using the internet to deliver the instruction (Queen, Lewis, & Coopersmith, 2011). The rising number of K-12 students being serviced through online courses makes an examination of the teacher qualities and preparation needed to ensure effective instruction in the online environment more important than ever before. Haycock and Crawford (2008) and Beare, Marshall, Togerson, Tracz, and Chiero (2012) discussed that a gap in teacher quality has resulted in the gap we see with student achievement and noted that although many study results show that teacher preparation is critical, seldom are agreements reached regarding the best approach. Haycock and Crawford outlined several programs that demonstrated successful approaches in reducing the teacher quality gap. One district in Tennessee focused on new staffing followed by customized professional development and further education to fit the challenges of their unique urban environment, in New York City they focused on their recruitment to teacher preparation programs, and several other states have developed teacher residency programs that are more hands on and mentor based (Haycock & Crawford, 2008). These programs all focused on different aspects of teacher preparation in order to increase student achievement. The National Center for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) furthered the concern of teacher quality noting in their 2012 report that states were increasing their teacher evaluation requirements. As part of the increased teacher evaluation requirements the inclusion of student performance data to evaluate teacher effectiveness increased from a requirement in four states in 2009 to 22 states in 2012 (NCTQ, 2012). Concerns about teacher quality and student achievement are just as great, if not stronger, in the charter (specifically virtual) school realm. The National Education Policy Center (NEPC) reported that, of the 231 full time virtual schools that
received state accountability ratings, “only 33.76% had academically acceptable ratings” (Molnar et al., 2014, p. 3). In addition, of the 157 full time virtual schools reporting on-time graduation data, the graduation rate was only slightly more than half of the national average and “average virtual schools’ Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results were 22 percentage points lower than those of brick-and-mortar schools (2011-2012)” (Molnar et al., 2014, p. 3). Data show that the performance of virtual school students is, on average, not meeting the national performance average and one area that is recommended as a focus is teacher quality as well as further research on the specific subgroup of schools (Molnar et al., 2014). Virtual schooling is a unique and alternative education setting and therefore may differ from the traditional approaches to teaching and learning. The quality standards for online teaching developed by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2006) were endorsed by iNACOL who then developed a team to evaluate and improve standards to establish what online teachers should be able to do and what they should understand (iNACOL, 2011). These standards are currently the most widely accepted standards for online teachers. The purpose of this study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks to impact the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment. Prior studies show teacher preparation programs can impact student outcomes and teacher self-identification of their preparedness for the classroom (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, and Wycoff, 2009; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). As noted in several studies (Alexander, 2011; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Kennedy & Archambault, 2012; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Natale, 2011), there is an
argument for more context specific teacher preparation and field experiences. The purpose of this study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment.

**Significance of the Study**

In my review of the literature, I found several examples of organizations promoting standards for online teaching as well as suggestions for best practices, professional development, and teacher quality. An area found lacking in the preexisting knowledgebase was the teacher perspective of what is needed to be successful in the online environment and if they are prepared to meet those needs. Hathaway and Norton (2011) suggested further research be conducted to explore interaction of teacher preparation, online teacher skill requirements, and the impact of the virtual model. Kennedy and Archambault (2013) advocated for a common set of online teaching standards to be adopted by all programs for consistency.

The information gathered from this study will make a contribution to the current literature by providing additional information aligned with the published iNACOL standards for online teaching. This study will provide information about the success of preparing teachers for the online standards and offer information that will support or refute the current literature on professional development needs of fulltime, K-12, virtual teachers. It will also provide an additional set of data, collected and analyzed, that is aligned to the set of standards most widely recognized in the field of online education (iNACOL, 2011). The study will attempt to identify correlations between teacher demographics and preparation and self-identified outcomes of preparation level for each standard.
The information gathered will also contribute to current practice by offering teacher preparation programs insight into the current outcomes and needs of fulltime online teachers, hopefully guiding the development of teacher education content and practice opportunities. The information will also offer guidance to online school administration, professional development programs, and colleges and universities about the needs of current online teachers in order for them to be successful in the virtual environment. Finally, the information gathered will offer more in depth information to potential online teachers regarding the preparation path that may best support a teaching role in the online environment.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The primary research question of this study is: “Do K-12 fulltime online teachers perceive themselves as prepared to meet the iNACOL online teaching standards?”

Additional sub-questions stemming from the primary research question are:

Sub-Question 1: What teacher preparation programs increase the level of preparation to meet the online teaching standards?

Sub-Question 2: Is there a correlation between previous classroom teaching experience and teachers’ perceptions of being prepared to meet online teaching standards?

Sub-Question 3: Do current online teachers perceive the online teaching standards as sufficient in addressing the skill set required to be a successful online instructor?

**Research Hypotheses**

The hypothesis related to Sub-Question 1 is:
H$_1$: The traditional teacher preparation programs will produce teachers who perceive themselves as less prepared to meet the online teaching standards.

The hypothesis related to Sub-Question 2 is:

H$_2$: A positive correlation will be found between previous classroom teaching experience and teachers’ perceptions of being prepared to meet online teaching standards.

The hypothesis related to sub-Question 3 is:

H$_3$: Teachers will rate online teaching standards as moderately reflective of the needed skills.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study focuses on the development of teachers for the online environment. The research conducted is based on the assumption that the answers to the questions asked are available and there to be discovered as truth. This perspective is best categorized as positivist. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) describe the positivist approach as believing that reality exists apart from research and the research is used to gather information and identify and explain causal relationships between variables. This study seeks to explore those relationships between variables relating to teacher preparation and experiences and meeting the online teaching standards. Knowles’ (1980) theory of adult learning (andragogy) addressed assumptions made about adults as learners and stressed the importance of learning coinciding with development. Andragogy is specific to the instructional approach used to educate adult learners. An educator must know where their learners are developmentally and know what approach is best suited for instruction. The assumptions of adult learners do not conflict with the ideas of pedagogy. These assumptions should be used as guides and applied situationally when appropriate for the
development of the learner (Knowles, 1980). The idea that adults as learners may be in
the appropriate developmental stage to direct and evaluate some of their own learning
(Knowles, 1980) is applicable in this study because teachers are evaluating their own
preparedness for the online environment. The self-evaluation of teachers directly relates
to their preparation programs, where and how they learned to teach, which delves deep
into the idea of how best to instruct adult learners. Baran, Correia, and Thompson (2011)
addressed the idea of adult learners with transformative learning theory, where teachers
themselves are learning as adults and must engage in reflection and action to be able to
transform their own understanding of online teaching and learning. The idea that
teachers are reflecting on their practices and working to continually improve their own
outcomes drives the idea that preparation must include working with teachers to consider
alternative ideas which will then drive their learning and improvement (Baran et al.,
2011).

**Researcher Lens**

When conducting research it is important to recognize the beliefs and values of
the researcher. I attempted to reduce bias throughout the research; however bias does
exist and must be acknowledged. I work in the field of online education and
acknowledge that I do have some preconceived notions on the topic of teacher
preparation. I believe the more hands on experience that can be acquired the better
prepared teachers will be. I also believe that because online learning is still new to the
field of education, teachers enter the virtual world underprepared to meet the expectations
set forth by the organizations most involved in virtual schooling. In order to reduce bias
in the research I used the previously established iNACOL standards (2011) as the reference point for the skills online teachers need to meet.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations are factors within the study that may have an impact on the results and can be controlled by the researcher (Roberts, 2010). A delimitation of this study was that teachers were selected from only one online educational company’s teaching staff, limiting sample diversity. The counter measure was to ensure the participant pool included teachers from 25 states and did not focus on certain grade levels or subjects to provide the broadest sample population available within the individual management company. Another delimitation was the focus on only iNACOL (2011) standards which, although widely recognized, have not been consistently adopted across the states, possibly creating a participant pool unfamiliar with the information included in the survey. This was counterbalanced by providing the link to the standards in email communications with the participants prior to sending the survey and in the survey communications.

**Definition of Terms**

Due to the unique nature of the educational environment being studied, some terms may be used that the reader is not readily familiar with. The following section provides a brief definition of terms based on their use in this study.

*Andragogy:* “The methods or techniques used to teach adults” (dictionary.com Unabridged).

*Content Knowledge:* “The body of information that teachers teach and students are expected to learn in a given subject” (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).
**Distance Learning**: “Education in which students receive instruction over the Internet, from a video, etc., instead of going to school” (Dictionary.com Unabridged).

**Face to Face**: “Interaction that takes place in person, as opposed to online interaction or electronic communications” (Dictionary.com Unabridged).

**Online**: “Of or denoting a business that transmits electronic information over telecommunications lines; with or through a computer, especially over a network” (Dictionary.com Unabridged).

**Pedagogy**: “The art or science of teaching; education; instructional methods” (Dictionary.com Unabridged).

**Technology**: “A scientific or industrial process, invention, method, or the like” (Dictionary.com Unabridged).

**Virtual**: “Temporarily simulated or extended by computer software” (Dictionary.com Unabridged).

**Summary**

Chapter I provided an overview of my background in online education and where my interest in the preparation of teachers for the online environment was derived. Next, information was provided supporting the significance of this study. This chapter presented the purpose of the study as well as the research questions and hypotheses. I discussed the theoretical framework in which this study takes place as well as my perspective as a researcher. Delimitations were discussed to add transparency to the study and a definition of terms was provided to guide the reader in understanding and evaluating the included content. Chapter I provided a foundation for the literature review in Chapter II, which focused on teacher preparation, professional development for the
online educator, and required skills and best practices. Chapter III will outline the
research methodology including design, population and sample information,
instrumentation used, and ethical considerations. Chapter IV will cover a description and
analysis of the collected data, and finally Chapter V will present a summary of the
findings, including discussion and implications of the results as well as recommendations
for use of the findings and future research.
CHAPTER II

This review of the literature on teacher development is divided into three main themes. The first section of the literature review provides an overview of teacher preparation within urban and suburban settings and explores the concrete experiences offered in teacher preparation programs, contexts specific instruction that is provided for preservice teachers, and the various types of teacher preparation programs available. Section two examines professional development for teachers who are already in the field, with a focus on the virtual setting and the importance of supporting teacher skill in online instruction, not just technology. Section three explored the skills and best practices needed to be successful in the online teaching environment. The review of literature on teacher preparation, professional development, and skills and best practices aligns with the purpose of this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment.

**Teacher Preparation**

**Concrete Experience**

One definitive aspect of teacher preparation programs is the hands-on approach to having teacher candidates experience classroom instruction firsthand. These experiences include student teaching as well as additional field experience opportunities. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) shared how some programs graduate teacher candidates who self-identify as more prepared for the classroom; the candidates report they feel more comfortable in their teaching role. District employers seek these candidates because of their demonstration of skills early in their careers. The commonalities from these programs include common curriculum about development,
learning, content, and assessment, all taught through practice. Programs share standards of practice and performance and incorporate extended field training, with mentors, that is entwined with the coursework. The National Academy of Education Committee on Teacher Education (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007) found commonalties with the relationships between schools and teacher preparation programs, the use of case-studies, research, and assessments link what the teacher candidates are learning with their hands-on application. One of the key findings in Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden’s (2007) research was that all the information and skills being shared with the teacher candidates was also being applied in a classroom setting, facilitated by a mentor.

Ball and Forzani (2009), Ball, Sleep, Boerst, and Bass (2009), and McDonald, Kazemi, and Kavanagh (2013) had similar topics of study as they looked at teacher preparation being on the core practices, specifically more hands-on practice in preparation programs, instead of focusing on theory. Ball and Forzani (2009) argued that less focus should be placed on recruitment, as the effectiveness of good recruitment is diminished if the preparation program is not good. Ball et al. (2009) looked at a specific approach of a university structuring a teacher preparation program around common language, curriculum, and planning and moved the program focus from theory to practice. The authors found putting skills into practice through hands on experience is where teacher candidates learned the most about their future classroom practices (Ball et al., 2009). Scagnoli, Buki, and Johnson (2009) supported the finding that learning about skills and theories does not ensure the ideas will be transferred into teaching outcomes. McDonald et al. (2013) also stressed the importance of pedagogy as a focus in teacher preparation in addition to shifting the focus of instruction to be on core practices.
Pedagogy in teacher education is the art and science behind methods of instruction, content understanding, and philosophy of learning. McDonald et al. (2013) concluded that implementing a focus on increased practical experiences would be unsuccessful without providing the field a more common language and building on the pedagogy that is formed during the instructional piece of teacher preparation. The commonality would provide for more consistency regarding interactions and expectations among teacher candidates, instructors, and mentor teachers. Kennedy and Archambault (2012) also support the importance of common understanding of pedagogy, specifically when looking at the differences between face-to-face and online instruction.

Also in support of the importance of practical experience, Boyd et al. (2009) found the aspects of preparation programs that had effects on student outcomes during a teacher’s first year included increased classroom opportunities, student-teaching oversight, and capstone projects. Second year findings showed increased outcomes with more content specific knowledge (Boyd et al., 2009). Ronfeldt, Reining, and Dwok (2013) noted that the impact of student teaching was a better predictor of teaching quality, as measured by self-reported information, than were teacher candidate characteristics. The importance of classroom opportunities and field experience oversight is further supported by DeAngelis, Wall, and Che (2013). Downing and Dyment (2013) added to the discussion by finding that the longer teachers taught online, the more comfortable they felt with the skills and approach, concluding that hands on experience does make a difference in teacher outcomes.

Student teaching is a benefit to teacher candidate preparation; however the importance of the mentor cannot be overlooked. DeAngelis et al. (2013) found teachers
who were satisfied with their preparation programs were more likely to remain in the
teaching field, and there was a positive impact on retention if teachers had a quality
mentor in the same teaching field. Further, Holbert (2010) explored the perceptions of
student teachers regarding their mentors, who are an integral part of the successful hands-
on teaching experience. Holbert (2010) suggested, because there is little training
available for mentor teachers, the development of standards for mentor teachers and the
use of his findings to guide administrators in the selection of appropriate mentors for
student teachers. Ronfeldt et al. (2013) also supported the importance of quality mentor
teachers to enhance the student teaching experience, but were not able to explain what
characteristics defined a quality mentor with the results of their study.

**Context Specific Instruction**

**Environment.** Student teaching can be more than just spending time in a
classroom observing or trying out new strategies. Several researchers contended that
there is a need for more context-specific field experience opportunities (Alexander, 2011;
Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Kennedy & Archambault, 2012; Matsko & Hammerness,
2014; Natale, 2011). Freedman and Appleman (2009) conducted a study on a program
used to prepare secondary English teachers for urban, impoverished settings. They
discovered the trend for these teachers to remain in education after five years was higher
than the national average and much higher than the national average after one year
(Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Key aspects were identified by the teacher candidates as
to why they remained in the field of urban education. These aspects were the cohort
establishment early in the program, the clear urban focus from even the earliest of field
experiences, an integration of theory and practice, and the opportunity for ongoing
reflection (Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Freedman and Appleman (2009) explained the cohort provided an ongoing social network and support group among members, as well as support for involvement in additional professional networks. The pre-established group was able to offer support to one another during changes and difficult career times. The early focus on the urban setting allowed program members to develop the skills they needed in their future classroom by seeing the urban setting as “the context of their teaching rather than a ‘problem’ to be solved” (Freedman & Appleman, 2009, p. 334). The focus on the urban setting also allowed program members to learn specifically about the setting they would work in, develop pedagogical practices, and apply the learned theories in the context of the urban classroom (Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Finally, the reflection integrated into the program allowed teacher candidates to practice a necessary piece of monitoring and improving their teaching once in their own classroom (Freedman & Appleman, 2009).

The positive effects seen by training teachers in a contextually specific environment is both well established and well replicated. For example, Matsko and Hammerness (2014) also focused on the importance of hands-on practice, but structured their research to evaluate a program in which teacher candidates were trained in context-specific programs focused on urban education. Matsko and Hammerness (2014) looked at the contextual features of the field experience district and how the teacher preparation program helped teacher candidates to understand that context. Information reviewed in the study included program projects, syllabi, interviews and observations (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). The authors concluded that context-specific preparation is important and suggested teacher preparation programs look beyond the traditional
teaching curriculum to incorporate more district information (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Patrick and Dawley (2009) also stressed the importance of context specific training, by focusing on the need to prepare teachers for the online environment. The United States is falling behind as other nations, like China and Singapore, provide instruction to preservice teachers on how to teach online (Patrick & Dawley, 2009). The National Education Association (NEA) (2006) agreed stating, “it is essential that educators who instruct online are not only proficient in their subject area, but also specifically prepared for the unique challenges of online instruction, and adequately supported in their online pedagogy” (p. 9). Patrick and Dawley (2009) and NEA (2006) both recommended training be provided to preservice teachers to prepare them for the online environment. Downing and Dyment (2013), He (2014), and NEA (2006) supported the idea that preservice teachers should experience online education as students during their teacher education programs.

Several studies supported the idea of teacher preparation programs offering the opportunity for virtual field experiences (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012; He, 2014; Natale, 2011; Roblyer, Porter, Bielefeldt, & Donaldson, 2009; Scagnoli et al., 2009). In a study looking at the preparation of teachers for the online environment, Kennedy and Archambault (2012) found 78.7% of teacher preparation programs did not offer field experiences in online learning to preservice teachers, 21.3% did offer the experience, and of those only 1.3% are actually partnering with a K-12 online learning program. The study found that while some were receptive to the idea of virtual field experiences, believing that it was important to move in the direction of online schooling to meet the
needs of tomorrow’s teachers, others felt it was important to remain using only face-to-face experiences to uphold the traditional ideas of real kids, real classrooms, and real interactions (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012).

Downing and Dyment (2013) made similar conclusions through their survey of teacher educators in an online setting. The researchers found teacher educators had concerns about fully preparing teacher candidates through an online program limiting the modeling of a face-to-face environment, despite agreeing that the online environment would be appropriate for those who would be teaching in an online setting (Downing & Dyment, 2013). Kennedy and Archambault (2012) also found that some teacher educators do not feel preparing teacher candidates for virtual teaching is appropriate if they are not going to teach in that environment. Teacher educators’ views were also limited by their own experiences as they feel most comfortable providing instruction about teaching in a face-to-face environment and often feel face-to-face is how they learn best (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). Scagnoli et al. (2009) found that after faculty members have experience teaching online they develop a new view of online teaching and learning. This change in perception can lead to changes in face-to-face instructional practices as the instructor becomes more reflective of their approach and may select to transfer online components, such as digital resources, discussion forums, collaborative writing, and online work submissions to their classroom (Scagnoli et al., 2009).

Roblyer et al.’s (2009) study supported the importance of virtual field experiences to not only prepare teachers for the possibility of the virtual environment, but to enhance skills sought by employers and increase the teacher use of technology to engage students with a wide range of abilities. The idea of teachers demonstrating the 21st century skills
required of their students is reinforced by Natale (2011) who found, “educator
development must model technology-supported learning communities of peers, faculty
and mentor teachers through teachers’ pre-service academic and clinical experiences and
faculty must model digital-age teaching and learning” (p. 25).

**Diverse Learners.** Alexander (2011) examined the connection between diversity
training and teacher candidate self-efficacy. Data showed similarities between pre-
service and mentor teachers when results showed both were most comfortable developing
positive relationships and least comfortable communicating with English Language
Learners. Similarities were also found between university supervisors and educators
who reported the highest level of confidence in supporting pre-service teachers to help
classroom students feel like part of the group, yet reported less confidence, like the
teacher candidates and mentors, with teaching pre-service teachers to communicate with
English Language Learners (Alexander, 2011). Although all groups reported lower self-
efficacy with English Language Learners, Alexander (2011) noted that respondent’s race
and teaching experience correlated with self-efficacy. Teacher candidates with more
field experiences, especially those in the urban setting, reported higher levels of self-
efficacy with culturally responsive teaching, and mentor teachers of color and either less
than 11 or more than 15 years of teaching experiences also reported higher levels of self-
efficacy (Alexander, 2011).

**Universal Design for Learning.** Universal design for learning (UDL) is the
process used to ensure that all students have equal access to learning tools and resources
(Rose & Gravel, 2010). Rose and Gravel (2010) explained three guiding principles that
outline UDL: multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement.
Both Burgstahler (2002) and The Center for Online Learning and Students with Disabilities (2013) described the importance of considering accessibility and UDL principles in the design and teaching of online courses. Many states are not aware of the importance of accessibility within online courses and the amount of data collected to drive policies in this area is lacking (The Center for Online Learning and Students with Disabilities, 2013). Burgstahler (2002) provided specific considerations of disabilities and special circumstances as well as suggestions for how to prepare in advance to meet the needs of these diverse learners. UDL principles are not only built into our education’s legal system with laws around accessibility, but they are encouraged as best practice for improving classroom instruction for teacher candidates and their future students. Research conducted by He (2014) indicated that participants self-reported more confidence in their learning and their ability to teach online after having the experience of the online course that was based around the UDL principles. He’s (2014) conclusion supported the ideas of Downing and Dyment (2013) who found teachers gained confidence as they gained experience and understanding of what was required of them in the online environment and what could be accomplished through the use of the new environment.

Benton-Borghi (2013) suggested teacher educators need to merge UDL principals and technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) in order to best prepare teachers to meet the needs of all their future students. This combination of ideas best prepares teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to reach the diverse group of learners they will encounter. Compton (2009), Downing and Dyment (2013), and Hung and Jeng (2013) concluded that teacher candidate perceptions greatly influence their
understanding of virtual teaching. Compton (2009) found that for teacher educators to prepare teachers for the virtual environment the materials should be based on candidates’ specific needs and background to allow the development of the skills needed to teach in the virtual environment and be successful as 21st century teachers. Engleman (2007) discovered that learning styles and personalities impacted the students’ preferences for online course activities. This knowledge suggests that instructors might enhance the performance of their students by tailoring the development of their courses to align with the learning styles and personalities of the students in their courses (Engleman, 2007). Engleman (2007) suggested further research about the differences between faculty perceptions of needs and student preferences as well as which personalities prefer which activities and ways to incorporate UDL principals without personalizing a program for each individual student. King, Williams, and Warren (2011) expanded on the idea of using UDL principles as a way to move the focus of the larger instructional plan to the more individual level. Due to the vast differences teachers are facing with their student populations, the application of UDL principals allow teachers to incorporate 21st century skills while increasing student engagement and achievement (King, Williams, & Warren, 2011).

Content. Along with the importance of context-specific application of learning, teacher preparation programs must focus on content knowledge. Andrews (2009) described an approach used in a course taught with a multicultural focus and a service learning base. The course activities, as explained by Andrews (2009), resulted in teacher education students reflecting on their experiences, increasing social justice thinking, and increasing their commitment to and motivation for teaching in an urban setting. Andrews
(2009) shared that the students were able to make connections between learning and doing which relates to the importance of practical field experience. Henry et al. (2013) also looked at teacher preparation components in the five areas of courses and grades, ratings of professional behaviors and dispositions, student teacher performance ratings, Praxis I scores, and comprehensive, end of program, portfolio ratings to determine if they could be used as predictors of teacher quality. The authors concluded the five areas they researched were not good predictors of teacher success (Henry et al., 2013). However, Henry et al. (2013) did find that the number of mathematics courses taken could impact mathematics scores, although the same was not true for reading courses and corresponding scores. Although the study did not support the importance of reading as a content focus, it did provide support for the importance of mathematics content instruction, which means a content knowledge focus may only be beneficial in specific areas (Henry et al., 2013).

In another content focused study, Beachum, McCray, Yawn and Obiakor (2013) investigated perceptions pre-service teachers had about the importance of character education and their support of it as part of the curriculum. Beachum et al. (2013) found a majority of teacher candidates surveyed felt it was important to include character education within their methods course. Inclusion of character education as part of a methods course is one option; however the content could be taught as a separate course in the teacher preparation program (Beachum et al., 2013).

**21st century skills.** With 21st century skills an important consideration in the classroom, it must be considered within the teacher preparation classroom as well. Technology as a part of teacher education content was researched by Chiou (2011) and
Chiou’s (2011) study looked at the perceptions of pre-service teachers surrounding Web 2.0 technologies including the usefulness, ease of use, attitude towards computers, and experience using the technology. After looking at the perceptions, Chiou (2013) used the information to predict the intent to use the tools in future classrooms. Chiou (2013) concluded all four factors researched were statistically significant predictors of use. Foulger et al. (2013) explored the use of mobile technologies in teacher preparation and discovered a wide range of integration levels from *not at all* to *fully integrated*. Although several commonalities were found among pedagogy, curriculum, and tools, one question remained unanswered. Foulger et al. (2013) asked whether teacher education professors are modeling how to use the technology devices or if they are modeling how to incorporate the devices into teaching. The idea of incorporating technology skill instruction into teacher preparation programs is supported by several organizations including the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) (2011), International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), (2008), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), (2008), and the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB), (2006) as measured by their standards for teacher preparation programs or teacher standards with the expectation teachers can use these tools to enhance instruction with students.

Hung and Jeng (2013) conducted a study of doctoral students majoring in educational technology and their intentions to teach online and their results supported Compton’s (2009) idea that teacher candidates’ perceptions about online teaching are influential. Hung and Jeng (2013) established attitude, about the worth and control of online teaching as well as the perceptions of others about online teaching, to be one of the
greatest influencing factors on the decision to teach online. However, preparing for the technical aspect of online courses is not sufficient, online teachers also need trained for “effective instructional design strategies and pedagogies” (Hung & Jeng, 2013, p. 269) in order to increase the success of an online course. These findings agreed with the information provided by Downing and Dyment (2013) regarding online teachers’ perceptions of their needs prior to beginning in the online environment focusing on both technological and pedagogical needs. Therefore, it is not sufficient for instructors to only demonstrate how to operate technology; they must also include how to integrate.

Downing and Dyment (2013) discovered teacher educators were concerned about their lack of skill to meet online student needs, technology, and environmental understanding of interaction resulting in concern about whether the online environment could successfully prepare teachers for the classroom. Downing and Dyment (2013) supported the idea of increasing technology understanding as they report 67% of participants in their study identified a lack of technical skills needed to develop and teach an online course. Hathaway and Norton (2012) conducted a study with conflicting results. When two groups of faculty were compared, one group that was prepared through coursework for online instruction and another group that attended a one day workshop to prepare, Hathaway and Norton (2012) found that the group with more preparation was not more likely to increase the frequency of the tasks associated with quality online learning, nor did they report increased confidence in those skills. Although Hathaway and Norton (2012) concluded that having quality classroom experience, content knowledge, and online learning may be sufficient to produce a quality online instructor, the authors noted several limitations to be considered. First, the self-reported
data was open to interpretation particularly with the frequency data being reported on a Likert scale using never, rarely, often, and constantly. Second, the design of the online course the faculty was teaching had requirements that related very closely to those in a typical class setting (Hathaway & Norton, 2012).

**Types of Program**

An important piece to establishing effective teacher preparation programs is establishing what potential teachers need to know to be successful in their classroom careers with our students (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) acknowledged that teacher candidates begin teacher preparation programs at varying degrees of knowledge and skill level requiring instruction that must be developed to meet their needs and move them forward. This was supported by Compton (2009) who found teacher candidate preconceptions influenced outcomes and preparation programs need to adjust curriculum to meet prospective teacher needs. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) explained the varied levels of teacher candidates in part by the diverse alternative paths to teacher education. Although the components of strong teacher preparation are very similar for alternative and traditional pathways, Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) noted alternative programs should have high entry and exit standards for their candidates.

Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011) narrowed their focus to look at three specific approaches to development school, and the teacher-in-residence approaches to teacher preparation noting that differences occurred even within similar types of programs. The traditional model prepared teachers through a college of education and concluded with a four year degree, the professional development model was structured for non-education
degree holders resulting in a master’s in education, and the teacher-in-residence program was a requirement for non-certified teachers who were starting directly in the classroom from another career but taking teacher preparation courses at the same time (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2011). Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011) found similarities in the perceptions of teachers’ preparedness and intention to remain in teaching with the traditional and professional development models. The largest difference noted was participants in the teacher-in-residence approach found teaching to be a natural calling compared to teachers participating in the professional development and traditional programs who felt teaching skills could be learned and improved on (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2011). Teachers evaluated their preparation programs and Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011) found three common themes: classroom management, relationship of theory and practice, and diversity in the classroom. Differences were presented between the professional development and teacher-in-residence programs, with more widespread data points from traditionally prepared teachers (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2011). Teachers from the professional development and traditional models expressed more concern about their preparation to deal with classroom management, with varied results depending on the model they experienced, and teacher-in-residence program completers felt more confident in their classroom management based on the intensive instruction they received prior to entering the classroom (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2011). Those teachers who completed the professional development approach expressed more confidence in the relationship of transferring theory into practice and felt highly confident about differentiation and meeting student needs (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2011). Teachers in the teacher-in-residence and traditional approaches experienced less theory to apply in the
classroom and resorted to modeling their own experiences as students or those strategies modeled by their mentor teachers (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2011). Hathaway and Norton (2012), Roblyer et al. (2009), and Scagnoli et al. (2009) found experience as an online student can translate into the demonstration of skills as an online teacher, supporting the idea that teachers, without explicit instruction and practice, will model what they know from experience. Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011) determined diversity concerns were more widely expressed by teachers from the teacher-in-residence program in regards to their shock and concern for lack of student achievement.

Goldhaber, Liddle, and Theobald (2013) conducted a statewide research study in Washington and determined that the preparation program teachers came from accounted for only a small impact on teacher effectiveness, but there was a meaningful difference between those programs designated as the least and most effective. As noted by Goldhaber et al. (2013), Washington State does not have a wide range of alternative preparation programs and the components of the programs that were more or less effective were not evaluated to determine what is or is not working. In comparison, Henry et al. (2014) conducted a statewide study in North Carolina categorizing a total of ten different teacher preparation paths. Overall, Henry et al. (2014) found that those teachers prepared in undergraduate in-state public programs outperformed teachers prepared through other methods. Henry et al. (2014) also noted that some teachers of grades or subjects were more successful when prepared through other methods. Teachers prepared through the Visiting International Faculty program were more successful at the elementary level; alternative entry teachers were less effective in high school, and Teach
For America members were more effective in STEM at the upper grade levels (Henry et al., 2014).

Dillon (2011) contended there is a need for additional quality research and oversight for virtual schools to look for a way to monitor and evaluate the success of the program. This need is similar to evaluating teacher preparation programs as researchers look to find what an accurate measure of success is. Goldhaber et al. (2013) and Henry et al. (2014) used value-added achievement data for students in Reading and Math to establish teacher effectiveness, which is used to evaluate teacher preparation program effectiveness, but this measure is limiting in subject area and grade levels as well as being a controversial measure of student success.

Kennedy and Archambault (2013) explored seven higher education programs that have expanded their teacher preparation focus to include the online setting and Lane (2013) studied an open, online class (The Program for Online Teacher Certificate Class or POT Certificate Class) that was created to prepare higher education faculty for the online teaching environment. The programs described focus on online and blended environments, preservice and inservice teachers, and coursework and virtual field experiences (Kennedy & Archambault, 2013). The information gathered from their program review highlighted the importance of partnerships between higher education institutions and K-12 virtual programs, the need for teacher programs to have a common understanding of the requirements of K-12 online teachers, and more consistency among K-12 programs (Kennedy & Archambault, 2013). Kearsley and Blomeyer (2004) also supported the need for a common set of standards for online teaching to more consistently guide teacher preparation programs in what their candidates know and do.
Lane (2013) found that the course was successful in its goals for faculty to increase online resources, develop a personal pedagogy for online teaching, and experience designing quality instruction for students through being online learners themselves. It is essential to prepare teachers for what they may face during their careers in education. Susan Patrick, President and CEO iNACOL, explained “No teacher should start their career with anything less than complete confidence that they have been effectively prepared for Day One” (Kennedy & Archambault, 2013, p. 4).

**Professional Development for Online Instructors**

Teacher preparation programs, with their variety of methods and components are structured to prepare teacher candidates to successfully instruct students. An additional consideration is what components of teacher preparation continue after initial teacher placement occurs. Wenglinsky (2000) found that teacher input, classroom practices, and professional development were linked to increased student achievement. Training in the content area, classroom practices (like higher order thinking and hands on learning activities) and focused professional development were areas that impacted student achievement, and policy makers were encouraged to concentrate on rewarding proven practices instead of focusing on recruitment and licensure (Wenglinsky, 2000). Baran and Correia (2014) supported Wenglinsky’s conclusion noting the quality of online programs at the higher education level directly relates to the professional development and support provided to the online instructors. Storandt, Dossin, and Lacher (2012) also supported the idea that professional development is essential because instructor quality impacts learner satisfaction. Natale (2011) collected information from higher learning institutes that showed, other than instructional technology, undergraduate programs were
not preparing preservice teachers for the online environment; that is done at the certificate or graduate level. When undergraduate programs are not preparing teachers for the online environment professional development programs must make up the difference and that has created a market for the professional development of online teachers to become industry based, serviced by online learning organizations, private for-profit companies, and within the online schools (Natale, 2011). Elliott, Rhoades, Jackson, and Mandernach (2015) specifically noted professional learning needs are different for faculty teaching online and suggested countering limited resources with offering targeted training based on faculty needs. Also suggested as a focus when developing professional development for online instruction is the delivery platform; offer professional development online to model online instruction techniques while instruction is occurring (Elliott et al, 2015). The field of professional development for online instruction continues to grow in higher education, offering instruction to both faculty teaching online courses and courses for teachers to learn about online teaching.

Baran and Correia (2014), Lane (2013), and Storandt et al. (2012) proposed specific professional development structures to support online instruction. Baran and Correia (2014) described, at the higher education level, the importance of an integrated system of professional development focused on three levels: teacher, community, and organizational. This model supports faculty transition to teaching online courses by offering targeted support to teachers about technology, online pedagogy, and course development and design, broader support to groups of online teachers through peer support and sharing of practices, and a measure of organizational support through shaping a culture accepting of online education by focusing on quality programs and
rewards for those involved (Baran & Correia, 2014). Lane (2013) described an open online course that supported the development of online teaching through a design where being an online student was part of learning about online teaching. Lane (2013) also supported the idea that pedagogy and hands on experience were more important to participants than a focus on technology tools. Storandt et al. (2012) explored the PBS TeacherLine model of professional development and suggested it may be applicable to K-12 and higher education settings. PBS’s TeacherLine model was designed to align with the professional development standards established by iNACOL and SREB featuring key components of initial training, ongoing support, feedback, and reflection (Davis & Rose, 2007; SREB, 2009; Storandt et al., 2012). Storandt et al. (2012) recommended focusing professional development plans on having qualified instructors, focusing on instructional skill more than technological skills, ensure the topics are relevant to the learners, and using a variety of strategies to meet all needs. The PBS TeacherLine approach to professional development resulted in positive feedback, low turnover, and high student return rates (Storandt et al., 2012).

The idea that professional development for online teachers needs to focus on the instructional skills of online teacher, not just the technology skills, is reinforced throughout the literature (Davis & Rose, 2007; Lane, 2013; Natale, 2011; Rice, Dawley, Gasel, & Florez, 2008; SREB, 2009). Rice et al. (2008) learned through a national survey of online teachers [27% of respondents were new to online teaching, 2% were brand new teachers, 55% had a master’s degree or higher] that 72% have participated in an ongoing training for online teaching. The study found needs that were rated as very important included the use of communication technologies, time management, academic
integrity and student internet safety (Rice et al., 2008). Rice et al. (2008) also noted professional development was taking place for teachers through ongoing training, workshops, one time sessions, and graduate courses; however in some cases no professional development was taking place. The topics of technology tools and online course development were found to be more important to brick and mortar teachers instructing an online class than full time virtual school teachers. Natale (2011) expressed that professional development should concentrate on the skills and practices online teachers must demonstrate to be effective in online environments, but noted that there is a lack of information beyond technology and skills to recognize what the true components of successful online instruction are.

Davis and Rose (2007) emphasized face-to-face and online teaching do not require the same skill set and while there may be some overlap, it is essential to target the needs of online teachers. Davis and Rose (2007) sought to dispel five myths about professional development for online teachers: (a) leadership support is not necessary, (b) classroom teachers are qualified to be online teachers, (c) classroom teachers are prepared to teach a previously developed online course, (d) the technology coordinator and counselor can provide needed professional development, and (e) new teachers who learn about online instruction in their preparation program will be ready to teach online upon graduation. Professional development can be best planned for if the virtual school administrators are aware of teacher needs, forward thinking with initiatives and policies to support teachers and their learning, willing to follow suggested guidelines outside their own organizations, and themselves comfortable with technology (Davis & Rose, 2007; Patrick & Dawley, 2009). SREB (2009) described an approach to professional
development for online teachers as one that correlates with the standards for online teachers. This approach touched on core needs such as licensure, content knowledge, technology use, working with students who have special needs, assessment, and data use, as well as more specific emphases on methodology of online instruction, engagement and collaboration in a virtual setting, feedback, technology safety, academic integrity online, and even the importance of teachers having online learning experience as students (SREB, 2009). He (2014) supported the idea that professional development should focus on skills needed by online teachers to be successful and also noted the link between professional development and increased teacher and course quality.

Wortman et al. (2008) approached the idea of supporting virtual teachers through a model of mentoring after they acknowledged most online teachers come to the position with: classroom experience, content knowledge, minimal exposure to online teaching, and technology skills with an interest in using them. The benefits of a mentoring program included the development of teaching skills for beginning online instructors, the development of leadership and communication skills for the more experienced teacher, and creating a culture of sharing throughout the school (Wortman et al., 2008). Lane (2013) agreed with the benefits of developing a community of online instructors and a culture of sharing. Professional development for new, new to online, or veteran online teachers can be presented through a variety of approaches, however some may be more useful depending on the participant and their needs (Downing & Dyment, 2013). Downing and Dyment (2013) surveyed teacher educators who had taken on roles with online instruction and established the most useful support provided was individualized from an eLearning Support team and second was the self-directed professional
development and the least useful professional development methods were formal seminars and workshops at the university. Whether professional development is ongoing, online, a structured program, a mentoring program, or isolated instances, experts agree that reflection of practices is essential to the growth of the teachers and the development of their ongoing learning (Davis & Rose, 2007; He, 2014; Lane, 2013; Rice et al., 2008; SREB, 2009; Storandt et al., 2012; Wortman et al., 2008).

**Required Skills and Best Practices**

The importance of the quality of online teaching is recognized by several organizations that have developed standards to direct the teachers in the field of online education (iNACOL, 2011; ISTE, 2008; SREB, 2006) and to direct institutions in the preparation of teachers (NCATE, 2008). The standards developed by SREB (2006) were fully endorsed by iNACOL and then later revised to address 11 overall standards in two main categories: What online teachers need to know and understand and what online teacher should be able to do (iNACOL 2011). ISTE (2008) addressed standards for teachers in a more simplified version of five standards: (a) Facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity, (b) Design and develop digital age learning experiences and assessments, (c) Model digital age work and learning, (d) Promote and model digital citizenship and responsibility, and (e) Engage in professional growth and leadership. The iNACOL (2011) standards clarify the original 11 standards developed by SREB (2006) and expand on the five standards established by ISTE (2008) resulting in the most recent, most comprehensive set of standards available to online instructors. The iNACOL (2011) standards include:
Standard A: The online teacher knows the primary concepts and structures of effective online instruction and is able to create learning experiences to enable student success.

Standard B: The online teacher understands and is able to use a range of technologies, both existing and emerging, that effectively support student learning and engagement in the online environment.

Standard C: The online teacher plans, designs, and incorporates strategies to encourage active learning, application, interaction, participation, and collaboration in the online environment.

Standard D: The online teacher promotes student success through clear expectations, prompt responses, and regular feedback.

Standard E: The online teacher models, guides, and encourages legal, ethical, and safe behavior related to technology use.

Standard F: The online teacher is cognizant of the diversity of student academic needs and incorporates accommodations into the online environment.

Standard G: The online teacher demonstrates competencies in creating and implementing assessments in online learning environments in ways that ensure validity and reliability of the instruments and procedures.

Standard H: The online teacher develops and delivers assessments, projects, and assignments that meet standards-based learning goals and assesses learning progress by measuring student achievement of the learning goals.
Standard I: The online teacher demonstrates competency in using data from assessments and other data sources to modify content and to guide student learning.

Standard J: The online teacher interacts in a professional, effective manner with colleagues, parents, and other members of the community to support students’ success.

Standard K: The online teacher arranges media and content to help students and teachers transfer knowledge most effectively in the online environment.

Rice (2012) explained that the standards for online education offer the guidance for effective strategies to be implemented with a focus on moving from the traditional model of teacher directed instruction to a more learner directed approach to learning. Natale (2011) noted that the standards, while influential in all states surveyed at the time, were not formally validated in any state with small-scale study data showing teachers expressed concerns about the standard language, application to varied teaching roles, and differentiation between face-to-face and virtual teachers.

**Technology**

Technology is an area of importance in online teaching and learning, and the idea that online instructors must be well versed in not only how to use technology tools but also how to teach with them is supported by several studies (Chiou, 2011; Davis & Rose, 2007; Downing & Dyment, 2013; Natale, 2011; NEA, 2006). Technology is more than being able to use tools to present information online; there is also the need for technology to plan and design instruction as well as engage students (Davis & Rose, 2007; Hanover Research Council, 2009; iNACOL, 2011; NEA, 2006). Mulig and Rhame (2012)
described the importance of enhancing lecture and presentation of information to engage students, including the use of discussions and supplemental resources. Online instructors in higher education are encouraged to use a variety of strategies, methods, and modes of learning to ensure the mastery of skills and to design course with collaboration, sharing of experiences, and discussions (University of Maryland University College, 2010).

Engagement of students in an online learning program can be accomplished, in part, by creating opportunities for interaction and discussion with both the teacher and other students that might occur more naturally in a face-to-face environment (Hanover Research Council, 2009).

**Communication**

Baran et al. (2011) explained that describing standards for teachers in the online environment does not assist teachers in adapting their skills from the traditional model to the online model; rather there is a need for increasing reflection, transformation, and integration of skills. One area where this is highlighted throughout the research is communication, including between teachers and students, teachers and parents, and students and other students (Cavanaugh et al., 2009; Davis & Rose, 2007; DiPetro, Ferdig, Black, & Preston, 2008; iNACOL, 2011; Mulig & Rhame, 2012; NEA, 2006; Rice, 2012; University of Maryland University College, 2010). NEA (2006) and Rice (2012) clarified two modes of communication, asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous is typically written, including email or discussion threads while synchronous is the real time interaction, often text, audio, video, or face to face discussion (Rice, 2012). Due to the nature of online instruction, text based communication is common and requires online teachers to demonstrate high proficiency
in written communication to ensure clear messaging, especially in instances where verbal and non-verbal cues are not present (Davis & Rose, 2007; Mulig & Rhame, 2012; NEA, 2006; Rice, 2012). Cavanaugh et al., (2009) described common policies surrounding communication in online education to include less emphasis on the method of communication and more focus on the amount and timeline of the contacts as well as the inclusion of communication guidelines regarding the appropriateness of communication taking place. Mulig and Rhame (2012) and University of Maryland University College (2010) stressed the importance of communication being ongoing between the teacher and students to be clear about expectations, answer questions, and provide opportunity for discussion. Online teachers must expand their communication skills to be well versed in the art of facilitating discussion in order to enhance communication with students as well as between students in collaborative settings (DiPetro et al., 2008; NEA, 2006).

Social presence is an important aspect to consider with communication in the online environment. The Hanover Research Council (2009) addressed social presence as helping to build community in an online course through expression, interacting with others’ responses, and building cohesiveness through common focus. Kožuh et al. (2015) found that intensity of social presence was not connected to academic success of students; intensity of social interaction was more relatable. They also noted that while other research has shown support of social presence in the online learning environment, it was measured differently. Yen and Tu (2008) supported the relationship between online communication and social presence, noting social presences is a complicated construct and must continue to be explored, especially as new technologies are developed that impact social presence in the e-learning environment.
Feedback

One important piece of interaction between online teachers and students is the feedback process, which needs to be constructive and timely (Hanover Research Council, 2009; NEA, 2006). The feedback process is especially important in the online environment because the environment is not conducive to immediate responses so online teachers must make an extra effort to ensure the feedback provided, which can include self-evaluation, is taking place often and is high quality (Davis & Rose, 2007; Rice, 2012). The University of Maryland University College (2010) found online students were most satisfied with their course when continuous, quality feedback was provided, both as an instructional practice and as a support to assist students with qualities important to develop their online learning skills.

Assessments and Data

There are several aspects to assessments and data to be considered in the online environment including security and quality (Mulig & Rhame, 2012; Rice, 2012). Assessments in the online environment need to be authentic and include a variety of assessment types including self-evaluation, rubrics, surveys, projects, discussions, audio or video recordings, online tests and quizzes, and presentations (DiPetro et al., 2008; Rice, 2012). The idea of multiple assessment types is supported by the Hanover Research Council (2009), as well as the idea that assessment should be ongoing and the outcomes should be verifiable. Rice (2012) also addressed the idea of academic integrity noting the increased opportunity for cheating when online learners are not directly being monitored. The idea in online education is that relationships between students and
teachers and a variety of ongoing assessments will result in reduced cheating or a better way to discover instances of dishonesty (Rice, 2012).

The Center for Public Education (2012) and Dillon (2011) suggested that the area of assessment lacking in virtual teaching is a way to monitor and evaluate the virtual programs and instruction being offered through outcomes and not simply suggested standards. A concern with the current research is the lack of focus on the components of what makes the successful programs successful, how we define success, the need to move beyond measuring virtual programs against face-to-face programs, and the importance of considering that certain programs may be more effective for certain types of students (Dillon, 2011). The Center for Public Education (2012) also expressed concern that although a modestly positive impact from online courses has been found, much of that research remains rooted in higher education data, while full time online students in K-12 show lower graduation rates and overall performance (Center for Public Education, 2012). It is agreed that a greater system of accountability must be developed in regards to virtual schooling programs (Center for Public Education, 2012; Dillon, 2011).

Swinglehurst, Russell, and Greenhalgh (2008) explored the idea of peer observation of teaching (POT) where colleagues observe each other to provide constructive feedback on instructional delivery. Key to successful implementation of a peer observation of teaching (POT) program is to define the purpose, typically for reflection and development and keeping the focus as structured to ensure the cultivation of a team that is working together to build trust, respect, and ownership of the instructional quality (Swinglehurst et al., 2008).
Conclusion

This review of the literature on teacher development was divided into three main themes. The first section focused on teacher preparation, including sub-sections on concrete experience, context specific instruction for preservice teachers, and types of teacher preparation programs available. Second was a focus on professional development for teachers who are already in the field, with a concentration on the virtual environment. Finally, the skills and best practices needed to be successful in the online teaching environment were reviewed.

The recommendations for future research opportunities with virtual teaching include exploration of the benefits of virtual teaching (Roblyer et al., 2009), examination of preconceptions of pre-service teachers about online teaching (Compton, 2009), and a further focus on the context specific best practices of virtual teaching based on content area and grade level (Compton, 2009; DiPetro et al., 2008). Hathaway and Norton (2012) suggested further exploration of the interaction between teacher preparation, online teacher skill requirements, actual online teaching skill implementation which is supported by Natale (2011) who recommended validation of the comprehensiveness of the standards and Kennedy and Archambault (2013) who suggested the need for a common set of online teaching standards to be adopted by all for consistency across programs, for preparation, application, and to guide professional development. Storanndt et al. (2012) also supported the idea of investigating professional development by exploring the link between online professional development opportunities and positive outcomes with online instructors who participate. Kearsley and Blomeyer (2004) suggested more in depth information about the experiences of K-12 online teachers is needed to inform
research about teacher preparation needs. It was also suggested to explore if the essential characteristics noted (standards) are supported by a large scale survey of current online teachers (DiPetro et al., 2008).
CHAPTER III

In Chapter III the design, population, sampling procedure, sample, instrumentation, data collection, ethical considerations, and data preparation are discussed in regards to this study. This study was conducted using a quantitative approach. A quantitative study was used to ask specific questions and gather data in order to manipulate variables and discover the impact of those variables on the measured outcome, in this case teacher preparedness (Roberts, 2010). It is essential in quantitative research to collect data and conduct the analysis using an unbiased approach (Creswell, 2008). This methodology was the appropriate fit for the study because the research questions were specific and collected data that was used to describe trends among the group of teachers regarding their preparation for online teaching (Creswell, 2008). A purposeful, convenience sample was used for easy access to online teachers across the United States, however that did limit participants to employees of one management organization. The primary method of data analysis was the use of descriptive and correlational statistics compiled through the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis program.

Research Design

This quantitative study was designed to collect data and explore the perception of online teachers in regards to how prepared they are to meet the iNACOL (2011) standards for online teaching and how well the standards reflect the skills they perceive as most important. The study was designed with a self-created survey instrument (Appendix A) aligned to the iNACOL (2011) standards for online teaching in an effort to produce an instrument that collected information directly related to answering the
research questions while also establishing credibility by using the most widely accepted set of online teaching standards available regarding K-12 online teaching. In order to conduct the survey, I obtained permission from the educational management organization that runs the schools in the 26 states where the teachers were surveyed. Permission was obtained through the company’s Request to Conduct Research (Appendix B). After the management company approval process was completed, I gained approval from Ashland University’s Human Subjects Review Board (Appendix C) to conduct the survey with the selected group of teachers as participants. Teachers were first contacted through email providing information and background about the study (Appendix D). Three days later another email was sent providing the information about the study again as well as a link to complete the survey (Appendix E). Information in both emails clearly stated participation in the survey was appreciated but voluntary and all participants would remain anonymous. Additional information about the process of collecting the survey responses is provided below. Once collected, the survey data was entered into the SPSS program for analysis. The purpose of this study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment. The collection and analysis of survey data seeks to further investigate the perceptions of current K-12 online teachers.

**Population of the Study**

The population of this study consists of K-12 teachers working fulltime in the online environment. The teachers are employed by a large education management company overseeing fulltime virtual schools in 26 states across the US. The education management company employs approximately 1,700 full time teachers. Schools overseen by this company have been in existence ranging from one to 12 years.
Sampling Procedure

This sample was selected using a method of purposeful convenience, as I had the ability to email all teachers employed by the company and my connection, not directly to the participants but as a fellow employee would, hopefully elicit a high response rate. This approach provided national data from a group of teachers with a variety of backgrounds. In order to conduct the survey I had to obtain permission from the education management company to conduct research within the schools (Appendix B). Contact was initiated with the population via an email providing information and background about the study (Appendix D). A follow up email was sent three days later again providing information about the study and this email included a link to complete the survey (Appendix E). The participants received information stating that participation in the survey was anonymous and voluntary. All teachers who were employed by the management company were sent the survey and question one responses were used to ensure data were analyzed from only those who are full time teachers.

The Sample

The survey was sent to 1705 full time online teachers working for an educational management company located in 26 states. Teachers were surveyed from 25 states with schools willing to participate. Of 1705 potential participants, 459 replied to the survey request, however 11 replies indicated they were not full time online teachers and therefore were removed from continuing the survey. Of 448 participants who indicated they were currently full time online teachers, 53 participants completed only the first survey question. After removing 53 participants who did not take the survey the final sample consisted of 395 respondents and yielded a 23.17% response rate. Teachers
responding to the survey had a range of less than one to 13 years of online teaching experience with an average of 3.78 years and zero to 36 years of full time traditional teaching experience with an average of 6.27 years. Survey results showed 33.42% of participants held a bachelor’s degree, 63.04% held a master’s degree, and 3.54% held a doctoral degree. Due to the sample size and large geographic area, the results of this study demonstrate strong external validity and the opportunity to generalize results to the greater population of full time online teachers.

**Instrumentation**

The instrument used to collect the data for this survey (Appendix A) was created with the specific purpose of gathering information to use for this study. I created a survey with 28 items, the first six questions collecting background information. Next, the 11 standards of online teaching created by iNACOL (2011) were used in a Likert scale question in regard to perceived preparation to meet each standard. These 11 standards were selected because iNACOL developed them by clarifying the original 11 standards developed by SREB (2006) and expanding on the five standards established by ISTE (2008) resulting in the most recent, most comprehensive set of standards available to online instructors. It is noted on the iNACOL website that “the iNACOL standards for online programs, course content, and teaching have been used by hundreds of institutions across the world for district programs, state online schools, statewide course review projects, university teacher training programs, and accreditation agencies.” The same 11 standards were used in second Likert scale question asking teachers to rate their opinions of the importance of those standards for success with online teaching. The Likert scale items were taken directly from the iNACOL standards (2011). The background questions
were designed to be simple and straightforward in order to collect only the data needed to answer the research questions.

To develop the survey, I consulted with a part-time online teacher who previously worked for the company, two first year administrators who were fulltime teachers for the company the previous year, and one fulltime online teacher who works for a different education management company. Collaboration with this group helped to increase the content validity, readability and understandability of the survey. Small changes were made to the original survey based on the feedback from the field test. The group suggested minor wording changes to clarify which educational settings were being explored, if questions were relating to any service or specific to roles and full time positions. The educational management company approving the study suggested the inclusion of clarifying the year programs were completed.

Data Collection

The survey was introduced by an email (Appendix D) earlier in the week to explain the background and purpose of the study as well as a brief description of the survey I asked teachers to complete. The collection of the survey data began on a weekday by sending the survey email (Appendix D) on a Thursday morning. Background and purpose information about the study was repeated when the survey link was sent. The survey was conducted using survey monkey as a data collection tool, which allowed for the collection of responses anonymously in an accessible format to all teachers, as all staff have access to email, computers, and internet. Each informational email contained a provision that should participants have any questions they were welcome to contact me for further information. My contact information, email, phone,
and address were provided. The email with the survey link (Appendix D) was sent again one week later to remind participants they were still able to participate. A final email follow up (Appendix D) was sent five days later thanking those who participated and offering an additional day for anyone who remained interested to complete the survey before it closed. The survey officially closed two weeks after it opened.

**Ethical Considerations**

When any research conducted incorporates the use of people as participants, the protection of those participants is essential. Participants who were surveyed were all adults and were informed several times that participation was anonymous and voluntary. I addressed ethical concerns by having the proposal for the study approved by both the Human Subjects Review Board and the education management company’s research approval committee. I informed participants about the background and purpose of the study prior to and during the data collection process.

**Data Preparation**

Data collected through the survey was entered into the SPSS program for analysis. Descriptive and correlational statistics were computed using SPSS. Chapter IV provides more detail regarding the outcomes and significant findings from the data.

**Assumptions**

Several assumptions were made during this study. First, it was assumed that teachers who are better prepared to be online teachers would be more successful in the field of online education. Second, it was assumed that those currently in the field have the knowledge and skill set to determine what makes an online teacher successful. Finally, it was assumed that all teachers surveyed had participated in some type of
additional instruction for the field of online education. This assumption was based on the knowledge that, at a minimum, the teachers have access to the company wide professional development program offered by the management organization.

**Summary**

Teachers surveyed represent a wide population in regard to demographic data; however they are only one sub-set of fulltime online teachers. This chapter described the design of the research study, the population, sampling procedure, and sample, the instrumentation, data collection, ethical considerations and preparation of the data. Chapter IV explains the analysis of the data collected and its findings.
CHAPTER IV

This chapter will focus on the data analysis and interpretation of the information collected during the survey of full time online teachers. The chapter contains an introduction, general description of the data, research questions and answers, and a summary of the results. The main focus of this chapter will include answering the central research question and the three sub-questions as well as evaluating the three hypotheses stated in Chapter I. The data are summarized and presented prior to answering each of the questions using descriptive statistics, frequencies, and Pearson’s correlation coefficient which were obtained through the SPSS program.

Demographic and Experience Results

Teachers surveyed to collect data for this study consisted of those employed as full time online teachers within a management organization overseeing virtual schools in 26 states.

Each teacher who participated in the survey completed a questionnaire with seven demographic and experience questions followed by two Likert scale questions that each asked the participant to rate 11 items. These 11 items were the iNACOL standards for Online Teaching (2011). Teachers were asked to rate their preparation for each of the standards and they were asked to rate their perception of how well each standard reflects the skills needed to be a successful online teacher. The background questions were asked to gauge experience of the teacher as well as the type of preparation and training received. The standards were used in the rating questions to collect information on not only how prepared teachers feel, but also if the standards accurately reflect the skills needed, based on the opinions of those in the field. The information collected offered
insight into how well teachers are prepared for the online environment, and for what skills they need to be prepared.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the teachers’ teaching experience and table 4.2 presents an overview of the teachers’ educational backgrounds.

Table 4.1

*Experience of Sample Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Range of Years</th>
<th>Average Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Time Online</td>
<td>N = 362</td>
<td>&lt;1 – 13</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Time Traditional</td>
<td>N = 322</td>
<td>0-36</td>
<td>6.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2

*Teacher Preparation of Sample Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Completed</th>
<th>Bachelor’s</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 132</td>
<td>N = 249</td>
<td>N = 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Preparation Program</th>
<th>Four Year College or University</th>
<th>Bachelor’s Plus</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Alternative Pathway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 176</td>
<td>N = 64</td>
<td>N = 111</td>
<td>N = 44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

Sub-Questions

To explain why some teachers felt more prepared than others for the online environment sub-question one explored which teacher preparation programs increased the level of perceived preparation to meet the online teaching standards, sub-question two explored if there was a correlation between classroom teaching experience and feeling prepared to meet online teaching standards, and sub-question three focused on teacher perception regarding the standards and if they reflect the necessary skills for successful online teaching.

Sub-Question One. Sub-question one asked “What teacher preparation programs increase the level of preparation to meet the online teaching standards?”

Data collected through teacher survey questions six and eight were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The file was split by teacher preparation program in order to examine the average preparation rating for the iNACOL standards for each of the preparation program types. The focus of this analysis was to explore the impact of the type of teacher preparation program on the teachers’ perceived preparation for the iNACOL Standards of Online Teaching. Teachers who completed their teacher preparation through a Bachelor’s plus program reported the highest average rating (4.12) for their preparation to meet the standards, and those preparing through an alternative pathway reported a close second highest average rating (4.10). The average preparation rating for teachers completing their preparation at a four year college or university was 4.06, and the lowest reported rating (3.95) came from those who completed teacher preparation through a Master’s program.
Table 4.3 shows the teacher preparation program with the highest and lowest average preparation score for each of the 11 online teaching standards. While the differences are not substantial, a pattern is present with the majority of the highest preparation averages coming from those teachers who participated in a bachelor’s plus program and the majority of the lowest preparation average coming from those teachers who achieved their license through a Master’s program. These individualized ratings for each standard again support the overall average findings.

Table 4.3

*Teacher Preparation Programs with the Highest and Lowest Average Preparation Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Highest Average Teacher Preparation Score</th>
<th>Lowest Average Teacher Preparation Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus = 4.07</td>
<td>Masters = 3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Alternative Pathway = 4.11</td>
<td>Masters = 3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus = 4.09</td>
<td>Masters = 3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus = 4.44</td>
<td>Masters = 4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus = 4.29</td>
<td>Alternative Pathway = 4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus = 4.07</td>
<td>Masters = 4.00 Four Year College/University = 4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus = 3.82</td>
<td>Alternative Pathway = 3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus = 4.05</td>
<td>Masters = 3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Alternative Pathway = 4.24</td>
<td>Masters = 3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus = 4.61</td>
<td>Masters = 4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Four Year College/University = 4.00</td>
<td>Masters = 3.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the information collected in the survey and the analysis conducted there was no evidence to suggest that the type of teacher preparation program an online teacher was licensed through has a substantial impact on their perceived preparation to meet the iNACOL Standards for Online Teaching (2011). Thus, H₁: The traditional teacher preparation programs will produce teachers who perceive themselves as less prepared to meet the online teaching standards, was rejected.

Upon further review of the survey data, an additional analysis was conducted which focused on the sub group of teachers reporting one or fewer years of online teaching experience. Initial results showed that although the teachers completing their preparation through a Bachelor’s plus or alternative pathway program reported higher levels of perceived preparation to meet the standards, all preparation programs yielded comparable results in levels of reported preparation. In consideration of the assumptions noted in Chapter III, it was acknowledged that all survey participants have access to in house professional development through their schools. Therefore, in order to more accurately compare the skill set teachers acquired through their preparation program the analysis of descriptive statistics that was conducted focused only on the group of teachers who were new to online learning.
Table 4.4

*Average Perceived Rating of Preparation to Meet the Online Teaching Standards*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 or Fewer Years Online Teaching</th>
<th>All Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Year College/University</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Pathway</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current teachers with one or fewer years of online teaching experience who completed their teacher preparation through an alternative pathway program reported an average preparation rating of 4.19, the highest for the less experienced group. Similar ratings were recorded for those who attended a four year college or university (3.95) and those who completed a Bachelor’s plus program (3.98). The lowest reported rating (3.78) again resulted from the teachers who completed their preparation through a Master’s program. The analysis of perceived preparation based on type of teacher preparation, when conducted with a focus on only new online teachers, again rejected the hypothesis that those teachers prepared through a traditional program (four year college or university) will perceive themselves as less prepared to meet the online teaching standards. Although this calculation does show that the alternative pathway results in the teachers that feel most prepared, it also continues to support the Master’s program as the least impactful on perceived teacher preparation.
**Sub-Question Two.** Sub-question two asked “Is there a correlation between previous classroom teaching experience and teachers’ perceptions of being prepared to meet online teaching standards?”

Data collected through survey questions four and eight were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient. The focus of this analysis was to determine if there was a correlation between years of classroom teaching experience and how prepared teachers perceived themselves to be to meet the online teaching standards. The analysis resulted in a weak, negative correlation that was not statistically significant, between years of classroom teaching experience and the perception of being prepared to meet the online teaching standards, $r(262) = -0.047, p > .05$. As such, data from sub-question two indicated that the years of classroom teaching experience possessed no significant relationship to how prepared teachers perceived themselves to be for the online classroom. This is congruent with the current literature on this topic and will be discussed in Chapter V. Consequently, $H_2$: A positive correlation will be found between previous classroom teaching experience and teachers’ perceptions of being prepared to meet online teaching standards, was rejected.

**Sub-Question Three.** Sub-question three asked “Do current online teachers perceive the online teaching standards as sufficient in addressing the skill set required to be a successful online instructor?”

Data collected from the teacher survey in question nine was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The focus of this analysis was to determine if the most widely accepted set of standards for online teachers reflects the skills those in the field find are necessary to be successful as online teachers. Participants were able to select from five
ratings for each of the 11 standards (a full description of each standard is available in Chapter II), “useless” (1), “not very important” (2), “neutral” (3), “important” (4), and “essential” (5). The results from survey question nine show the average rating for each of the 11 standards was higher than four (important), and the overall average for the 11 standards combined was 4.45. Also noteworthy, no participant marked any standard as “useless” and standards B, use technologies to support student learning and engagement and D, promoting student success through clear expectations, were not rated by any participant as “not very important”. The three standards that had the highest percentage of teachers rating them important or essential were standards A, use effective online instruction to enable student success, B, use technologies to support student learning and engagement and D, promoting student success through clear expectations. The three standards rated with the lowest percentage of teacher selecting important or essential were standards E, modeling appropriate technology behaviors, G, creating and implementing online assessments, and H, developing assignments and using them to measure progress on standards based learning goals. Standard K was also rated low which could be, in part, due to the wording used in that standard. However, even the standards with the least percentage of importance had over 90% of teachers rate them as important or essential. Figure 4.1 shows how each of the standards were rated by the teachers.
Data analyzed from the survey shows that the 11 standards developed by iNACOL in 2011 do contain skills that current, full time online teachers feel are necessary to be successful in the field. As such, H₃: Teachers will rate online teaching standards as moderately reflective of the needed skills, was rejected.

**Central Research Question**

The central research question in this study asked “Do K-12 fulltime online teachers perceive themselves as prepared to meet the iNACOL online teaching standards?”
Results from survey question eight showed teachers rated themselves an average of 4.05 regarding their overall preparation to meet the 11 standards (a full description of each standard is available in Chapter II). Participants were able to select from five ratings, “not prepared” (1), “barely prepared” (2), “somewhat prepared” (3), “well prepared” (4), and “exceedingly prepared” (5). Figure 4.2 shows the percent of teachers who rated themselves as well or exceedingly prepared for the 11 standards surveyed.

Figure 4.2. Percent of teachers rating themselves “well prepared” or “exceedingly prepared” to meet the iNACOL Standards for Online Teaching (2011).

The three standards showed the highest percentage of well or exceedingly prepared teachers were standards D, promoting student success through clear expectations, E, modeling appropriate technology behaviors, and J, professional interactions. These standards also had the highest average rating, as shown in Table 4.4.
Table 4.5

*Average Rating of Perceived Preparation for Online Teaching Standards*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three standards showing the lowest percentage of well or exceedingly prepared teachers were standards G, creating and implementing online assessments, H, developing assignments and using them to measure progress on standards based learning goals, and K, usage of media to effectively transfer knowledge. These three standards also had the lowest average ratings as shown in Table 4.3.

**Summary of Results**

This chapter provided an overview of the data analysis process and its outcomes. The results of this study do not show relationships between an online teacher’s perception of being prepared for the online teaching environment and their teacher preparation program or their previous years of classroom teaching experience. Data do, however, show the majority of teachers surveyed felt prepared to meet the standards for online education and they agreed that the current standards reflect skills necessary for online teachers to be successful. Chapter V will discuss these results further and offer recommendations for future research and actions based on the findings in this chapter.
CHAPTER V

This chapter discusses the results shared in Chapter IV and how they related to previously published research and literature on similar topics regarding teacher preparation. This chapter will also discuss possible reasoning for the information and results gathered from the conducted survey. This chapter summarizes the findings of each of the three sub-questions, answers the hypotheses, and discusses the meaning of the results. A discussion of additional findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research is also included.

Summary of Findings

Teacher Preparation Programs

Sub-question one asked “What teacher preparation programs increase the level of preparation to meet the online teaching standards?” This question took the central question a step further to see if there were specific types of preparation that resulted in teachers feeling more or less prepared to meet the online teaching standards. The results presented in Chapter IV indicated there were only slight differences in the average level of perceived preparation for each of the four preparation program types. Survey results showed the highest average preparation rating came from the teachers who trained through a Bachelor’s plus program. The second highest rating of preparation came from those who completed an alternative pathway program, followed by a four year college or university and then a Master’s program. There were eight of the 11 standards where the highest average rating of preparation came from teachers who completed a Bachelor’s plus program and no standards were the lowest rated from that program type. There were eight of the 11 standards where the lowest average rating of preparation came from
teachers who completed a Master’s program and no standards were the lowest rated from that program type; however one standard did tie with the four year college or university for the lowest preparation rating.

Additional analysis was conducted to explore the impact of teacher preparation programs on perceived teacher preparedness for the online teaching standards with a focus on only those with one or fewer years of online teaching experience. This analysis was conducted in an effort to eliminate potential bias of the results when it was considered that those with more familiarity in the online environment and participation in their school based professional development may find themselves more prepared to meet the standards based on their experience and not their preparation program. In this group, the data showed those feeling the most prepared had completed an Alternative Pathway program. The next highest groups were those completing a Bachelor’s plus and four year college or university programs, and these results were very close at 3.98 and 3.78. With the group of new online teachers, however, the results still showed the lowest level of preparation came from those completing a Master’s program.

The difference in teacher perceived preparation to meet the iNACOL Online Teaching Standards (2011) was minimal between the four types of teacher preparation programs: four year college or university, Bachelor’s plus, Master’s, and Alternative Pathway. The close average scores regarding teacher preparedness from each preparation program indicated there was no clear decision on which program is the best to prepare online teachers. However, Downing and Dyment (2013) noted the longer teachers taught online, the more comfortable they felt with the approach and needed skills. I determined more accurate results may be achieved by analyzing the perceptions of teacher
preparedness for only those teachers surveyed who had taught one or fewer years. These results established a different program for highest average preparation score, the same program for the lowest average preparation score, and a similar range of average preparation scores. When all teachers surveyed were analyzed, the range of least to most prepared by program was 3.95 - 4.12, a difference of only 0.17, and when new teachers surveyed were analyzed the range of least to most effective prepared by program was 3.78 – 4.19, a difference of 0.41. From this data analysis I concluded that although there is still not enough data to show one preparation program far outperforms the others in online teacher preparation, greater difference is visible in how well first year teachers are prepared. In both analyses, the Master’s program produced the teachers with the lowest self-identified level of preparation to meet the online standards. New teachers prepared through a Master’s program reported an average preparation level of 3.78 and all teachers from a Master’s program reported an average preparation level of 3.95. These averages were based on a 1-5 Likert Scale rating system, meaning even those teachers in the group prepared through the Master’s program noted an average score of almost “well prepared”. The data show teacher preparation model alone is not a strong predictor of how well prepared teachers will feel to meet the online teaching standards.

**Classroom Teaching Experience**

Sub-question 2 asked “Is there a correlation between previous classroom teaching experience and teachers’ perceptions of being prepared to meet online teaching standards?” The analysis results shared in Chapter IV showed there was not a strong correlation, nor was it statistically significant, between years of classroom teaching and the perception of being prepared to meet online teaching standards.
Results showing no significant correlation between years of teaching in the classroom and perceived level of preparation to meet online standards parallel the findings of Hathaway and Norton (2012). Their study determined that teachers with more preparation for online instruction did not implement, at a higher level, tasks associated with quality online learning. Similarly, this study showed that additional experience in the field of teaching did not translate into higher perceived preparation for the online classroom. However, like Hathaway and Norton it must be noted that there is always a risk of compromised data when teachers are self-rating on a Likert scale as interpretation of the categories is uncontrolled for. It could be concluded in this study that preparation through the traditional classroom does not translate into feeling prepared for the online classroom. This supports Natale (2011) who advocates that professional development for online instructors should focus specifically on the skills needed to be successful in the online classroom. This study shows that focusing on traditional instruction will not result in more prepared online teachers. A question remaining unanswered by this study is: If additional years in the online classroom resulted in teachers who felt more prepared to meet the online teaching standards? Downing and Dyment (2013) did find additional years teaching online resulted in teachers who felt more comfortable with the skills needed for online instruction.

**Online Teaching Standards**

Sub-question three asked “Do current online teachers perceive the online teaching standards as sufficient in addressing the skill set required to be a successful online instructor?”
Results from the survey showed an overall average rating of higher than “important” or a 4.45 (on a five point scale) for the importance of the 11 iNACOL Online Teaching Standards (2011). When separated into the 11 individual standards each had an average rating above four and no standard was rated as useless (a one). The standards rated the lowest for importance still offered 90% of teachers regarding them as a four or five (important or essential). Using these results I have concluded that current online teachers perceive the 11 iNACOL Online Teaching Standards (2011) as reflective of the necessary skills needed to be successful as an online teacher.

Natale (2011) found professional development for online teachers needed to be focused on the skills teachers need for online instruction, but noted a lack of information on what those skills actually are. This study supports the online teaching standards developed by iNACOL (2011) as demonstrative of the skills that are important to the success of online instruction. A question that remains unanswerable from the data collected is: Are there additional skills not included in the standards that are necessary to be a successful online teacher? I would also be interested to analyze if there was a difference in how important the standards were rated depending on the amount of online teaching experience a teacher had. In the world of online education, advancements seem to be made frequently. The iNACOL (2011) standards are now four years old. This study shows current online teachers find the standards in line with their perceptions of what is needed in the online classroom, but I do question if another update is soon to come from iNACOL, and if that update would incorporate additional skills into the standards or remove some of the current language.
Limitations

Limitations are factors within a study that may have an impact on the results, but are outside the control of the researcher (Roberts, 2010). Several limitations are present within this study. First, the sample size was limited by the number of teachers willing to participate, resulting in a total response of 395 surveys (23.17%). Several potential participants expressed concern with the timing of the survey, noting the end of the year was too busy of a time to take on an additional task, one noted specifically the survey was too long to complete during the busy time of year. Another limitation was the participants were all from the same education management company, resulting in a sample that had access to specific, structured professional development through their company. This limitation was addressed with an additional analysis of program preparation data for only those teachers reporting one or fewer years of online teaching experience. There were also several limitations that occurred within the survey instrument. Participant feedback informed me there were concerns in some areas about not being able to mark multiple answers, for example what grade level is currently being taught. Another concern mentioned was no option on question seven to select not applicable, forcing the participant to pick something to move on.

Implications for Practice

The implications for this study pertain to several groups. The first group is current and prospective online teachers. Rice et al. (2008) found 27% of surveyed teachers in their study were new to online teaching. 20.5% of teachers who participated in this study had one or fewer years of experience in online teaching. Teachers should be aware that their decision of which preparation program is not what will determine their
success as online teachers. Rather, teachers should focus on reviewing the iNACOL Standards for Online Teaching (2011) and ensuring they are willing and able to meet that skill set for a successful career in online instruction. The second group is online schools. When recruiting and interviewing for online teaching positions the focus should not be on what type of program the teacher completed. Those hiring teachers for online classrooms would be further ahead to focus their questioning around the teacher’s preparation to meet the online teaching standards and their background skills that would assist them in being proficient in teaching online. When possible, schools should seek candidates with previous online learning experience. Downing and Dyment (2013) found 63% of their survey participants (teacher educators) felt they lacked the technical skills to develop and teach an online course to prepare teachers. This means schools want to look for teachers that have a background skill set, possibly teaching or as an online student, to ensure the basic technological skills needed to be successful. That conclusion is supported by this study, which showed the standards with the lowest average rating of preparation were A, B, G, H, and K. All five of these standards involve tasks such as creating, understanding, implementing, developing, delivering, and arranging education through technology. The final group includes all teacher preparation programs. Online education is growing and so are the needs for qualified teachers in the field. Teacher preparation programs should note the standards developed by iNACOL (2011) and prepare teacher candidates to meet not only the requirements for traditional classroom teaching, but also for the alternative approach of online education. This is especially important to programs developing specific instruction for online teaching certificates. Teacher preparation programs should identify the standards that teachers find the most important as well as those they are
finding themselves least prepared for in order to better approach. Kennedy and Archambault (2012) conducted a study resulting in a statistic that 78.7% of teacher preparation programs offer no field experiences in online learning. A skill set in online instruction is currently valuable to any online school that is hiring, but is expanding to traditional schools incorporating 21st century skills and online learning components within their standard program offerings.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Many additional research questions surrounding teacher preparation and online education were produced by this study. Additional research, focused on several areas, would benefit the fields of both teacher preparation and online education. Several researchers (Hathaway & Norton, 2012; Kennedy & Archambault, 2013; Natale, 2011) have noted the need for additional research on the skills needed by online teachers which relates to the need for common, validated standards. The Center for Public Education (2012) and Dillon (2011) declare the focus on standards is insufficient and research must focus on accountability for online education. Thus far no consistent measure of accountability for student achievement in an online school has been established. Goldhaber et al. (2013) and Henry et al. (2014) used value-added as a measure of student achievement and teacher effectiveness, but the value-added method remains controversial. It is time to establish research based methods of determining effective online teaching. States are expanding the use of student achievement data as a means of teacher evaluation. It is essential to define how teacher effectiveness is evaluated in the online environment and ensure appropriate calculations for student achievement are determined within the world of virtual education. Teacher preparation programs and
professional development providers will be able to increase their effectiveness once clear goals and outcomes are established.

Further research on teacher preparation for the online environment would benefit teacher preparation programs by providing additional information regarding what current online teachers perceive as good practice and what they feel is necessary in preparing candidates for this alternative environment. To enhance the current study, researchers could explore if more years as an online teacher increased the perceived preparation level to meet the standards. This data would offer additional guidance to both the teacher preparation programs and professional development providers. Supplemental research should be qualitative or mixed methods and include further exploration into possible additions to the current 11 standards. Researchers should review with current teachers in the field situations they felt unprepared to address and what standards need more specific training. A qualitative study focused on teacher preparation for the online environment should also explore why some standards are perceived as less important for online teaching success.

**Conclusion**

This study did not reveal a clear champion among teacher preparation programs regarding their preparation of online teachers. The current online teachers did feel prepared to meet the iNACOL Standards for Online Teaching (2011) and felt the standards were reflective of what is needed to be successful in the online teaching environment. No correlation was found between years of classroom teaching experience and how prepared teachers felt to meet the online teaching standards. Future teachers, online school administration, and teacher preparation faculty should consider the results
of this study when planning each of their roles in preparing for online teaching, staffing online programs, and implementing online instruction. Open collaboration and continued research will foster continued growth in the field of online education, benefiting not only teachers, schools, and preparation programs, but most importantly benefiting the students: today’s youth and tomorrow’s leaders.
References


Lane, L.M. (2013). An open, online class to prepare faculty to teach online. *Journal of Educators online, 10*(1), 1-32.


http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/technology?s=t

University of Maryland University College, Center for Teaching and Learning. (2010). *Best practices for online teaching*. Retrieved from
http://www.umuc.edu/facultydevelopment/upload/bestpractices.pdf

http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/virtual?s=t


APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT
Select the most appropriate answer or fill in a response to each question.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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<td>1. Are you currently a full time online teacher?</td>
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<td>5. What is your highest level of education completed? In what year did you complete the degree?</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Masters</td>
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<td>6. What type of teacher preparation program did you complete? In what year did you complete the program?</td>
<td>Four Year College or University</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Plus Education Program</td>
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<td>7. What other training have you had to prepare for online teaching?</td>
<td>College Course</td>
<td>College Certificate/Licensure Program</td>
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The mission of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) is to ensure all students have access to a world-class education and quality blended and online learning opportunities that prepare them for a lifetime of success. iNACOL is a non-profit organization focused on research, developing policy for student-centered education to ensure equity and access, developing quality standards for emerging learning models using online, blended, and competency-based education; and supporting the ongoing professional development of classroom, school, district and state leaders for new learning models. (www.inacol.org)

Please rate **how prepared you believe you currently are to meet** each of the iNACOL standards for online teaching.

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APPENDIX B

CONNECTIONS EDUCATION

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
PART I: APPLICANT INFORMATION (required)

Name ____________________________

Katherine M. Brecheisen

Address ____________________________

Telephone Number ____________________________

Present Position K-8 Principal

Name of Employer ____________________________

Employer Telephone Number ____________________________

Previous Position K-5 Elementary Assistant Principal

Name of Previous Employer N/A

Telephone Number N/A

If full-time or part-time student, name and address of institution you are attending
Ashland University 401 College Ave ~ Ashland, OH 44805

Academic Degree(s) you currently hold Bachelor's - Early Childhood Education
Master's - Educational Administration

Degree-granting Institution(s) ____________

Ashland University

If this research project is not part of an academic program of study, please describe why you wish to conduct this reach, and the intended audience for your research results.

Academic Program - Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies: Dissertation

PART II: GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF STUDY (required)

Title of proposed Research Project Preparing K-12 Teachers to Teach Online

Why do you wish to conduct this research? Dissertation / Area of Interest
As both a former online teacher and current online administrator, as well as someone with an interest in higher education, I want to learn more about preparing successful online teachers.

How is the project being funded? No project cost involved (dissertation funded via tuition)

Who is your advisor or committee chairman? (if applicable)

Name: Dr. James Olive

Institution: Ashland University

Department: Education: Leadership Studies

Address: 401 College Ave. Ashland, OH 44805

Telephone Number: 419-207-6643

Has the proposed research been approved by your advisor and/or thesis committee? Check one

X Yes  ____ No  *Email with advisor approval to move forward is attached. Committee and HSRB would like approval from Connections so I can move forward.

If yes, please attach supporting documentation of approval. If no, please attach further information and documentation of why this approval is not required.

What are the purposes of the study? The purpose of this study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment.

What is your hypothesis or research question? See Attachment: Research Questions
Of what value is this study to virtual or charter schools, or to education in general?

The value to current schools will be to assist in developing professional development, supplementing teacher preparation, focused on specific standards identified by online teachers. To education in general this research will guide teacher preparation programs and teacher educators to prepare teachers for the online environment.

What time schedule is foreseen for conducting the research? (Please submit the detailed Timeline, Part VI, as well as filling out the basic information below)

From _____ April 2015 _______ to ______ June 2015 ______

PART III: STUDENT/PARENT INVOLVEMENT (if applicable)

Which school(s) will be involved? All full time public schools

How many classes/subjects per school? N/A

How many students per class? N/A

What grades? K-12 - teachers

Total number of students (approximately)? N/A

Will students be selected on the basis of any particular characteristics? N/A

If yes, explain
In what ways and formats do you expect/hope to interact with students? (online question/answer sessions, assessments, questionnaires, etc.)  N/A

If interacting with students, approximately how many sessions and for how much time per session?  N/A

Will parents/guardians be involved in the study?  N/A

If so, explain how and for how much time:

PART IV: STAFF INVOLVEMENT (if applicable)

Will teachers be involved in the study?  All full time, K-12 Teachers

If so, explain how:  Completion of online survey

Will other staff members be involved?  No

If so, explain who and how:

Number of teachers involved?  ~2,000

Number of other staff members involved?  N/A

Amount of time per teacher/staff member?  <30 minutes

PART V: DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS (optional with initial application)

Please fill out this section as completely as possible. The more complete your application, the better your chances of having it approved. However, realizes that it may not be possible for you to provide all of the requested information at this time.
List below all assessment instruments to be used in the project, and whether you expect to administer them or if you will be requesting data from assessment instruments already administered (e.g. state test scores – previously administered by ABC Learning Styles Inventory – researcher to administer).

Teacher survey - created by researcher, field tested, and conducted online with the teachers.

Survey Instrument Attached, currently still in the editing process (as seen in the changes being tracked within the document).

Will all instruments be given to all students? N/A

Explain:

What additional student data, if any, will be gathered? N/A

How much time per student will be required for assessment? N/A

Who will purchase, administer, and score the assessment instruments? If a survey instrument needs to be purchased the researcher will cover the cost. If a free option is available that will be used.

Briefly outline your data collection schedule (e.g., by January 31 all learning styles assessments will have been administered; by April 1 all state test scores for the current year will have been reported)

Survey will be sent in May, initial email to describe, then 2 weeks, with reminders to complete.

What school records, if any, will be required? N/A

What student records, if any, will be required? N/A
Will this data be used anonymously? Yes

Explain: The schools will not be named. Teachers will answer the survey anonymously.

Are any special materials, equipment or facilities required? No

Explain:

Please list, in detail, all individuals and/or organizations to whom the research and data will be submitted for evaluation and/or publication.

The research findings will be presented to my dissertation chair and committee. The final dissertation will become published through Ashland University. HOWEVER, those surveyed will remain anonymous and the school will not be named. Further opportunities for publication will be explored if advisable.

PART VI: TIMELINE

All researchers must submit this timeline as part of their Application. You may enter specific dates or time ranges. For example, you may indicate that your intended start date is “April 1,” OR “within 6 weeks of acceptance of proposal,” OR “at the convenience of

Intended start date: May (TBD depending on approvals).

How long do you anticipate involving students/parents/teachers/staff in your research? Please give as much detail as possible.

Initial teacher communication will be sent introducing the survey 3 days prior to starting.

The survey will remain open for two weeks for data collection. (Total Teacher Interaction = 17 days)
After you have completed your research, how long do you anticipate spending collating data and findings, drawing conclusions, and writing up results?

Approximately two months (subject to change)

Anticipated date of submission of data, findings, and results to sponsor/evaluator

(should be at least 3 weeks prior to submission to sponsor/evaluator)

Tentative Timeline: July 17, 2015

Anticipated date of submission of data, findings, and results to sponsor/evaluator

Tentative Timeline: August 7, 2015

Anticipated date of submission of data, findings, and results for publication (if applicable)

To be determined by committee feedback.

PART VII: ABSTRACT

If approved by the Committee, your research proposal will be submitted to the applicable school board(s) for approval. In anticipation of approval, please provide, with your original application, an Abstract of your proposal, to consist of not more than one-half page in length, in 12-point standard font. Please include in your Abstract the following information:

- Statement of purpose
- The student/teacher/other group you are interested in working with
- The school or schools in which you wish to conduct your research
- Summary of your timeframe and key deadlines
- The audience for your research
- The expected use or publication location(s) for your findings
- A statement of how this research may be of value to virtual and/or charter schools, and/or may improve the quality of education
- How you will protect student confidentiality
- Any other high-level information you believe may be relevant to the school board(s) when reviewing your proposal.
PART VII: AGREEMENTS

1. I have read, understood, and agree to abide by the Research Request Guidelines, and I believe the application and timeline I have submitted accurately reflects the scope of my proposed research project. I have also read the Research Request Evaluation Checklist, and believe my proposal meets the criteria in the Checklist.

Katherine Brechein 3/20/15
Signature Date

2. I agree to comply with standard school staff pre-employment background check policy.*

Katherine Brechein 3/20/15
Signature Date

3. I have signed, submitted, and agree that I will at all times adhere to, the Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement.*

Katherine Brechein 3/20/15
Signature Date

*These may be completed as part of the confirmation of intent to conduct research process, once the original application has been accepted.
Hi Katie -

I think your drafts of C1-C3 are in good enough shape for us to schedule your proposal defense with the committee. Please look at the following dates and let me know if any of them do NOT work. Otherwise, I will offer these dates/times as possible options to the other committee members and we will get it scheduled.

Wednesday, April 1 - 1p, 2p, 3p
Wednesday, April 15 - 1p, 2p, 3p

JLO
Preparing K-12 Teachers to Teach Online

What is your hypothesis or research question?

The central research question of this study is: “Do K-12 full-time online teachers perceive themselves as prepared to meet the iNACOL online teaching standards?” Additional questions to be asked in support of answering this question are:

Sub-Question 1: What teacher preparation programs increase the level of preparation to meet the online teaching standards?

Sub-Question 2: Is there a correlation between previous classroom teaching experience and teachers’ perceptions of being prepared to meet online teaching standards?

Sub-Question 3: What are current online teachers’ perceptions regarding the online teaching standards and whether or not they reflect the necessary skills needed to be successful as an online instructor?

Research Hypotheses

The hypothesis related to Sub-Question 1 is:

H₁: The traditional teacher preparation programs will produce teachers who perceive themselves as less prepared to meet the online teaching standards.

The hypothesis related to Sub-Question 2 is:

H₂: A positive correlation will be found between previous classroom teaching experience and teachers’ perceptions of being prepared to meet online teaching standards.

The hypothesis related to sub-Question 3 is:

H₃: Teachers will rate online teaching standards as moderately reflective of the needed skills.
## APPENDIX A
### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Select the most appropriate answer or fill in a response to each question.

| 1. Are you currently a full time online teacher? | YES | NO |
| 2. How many years total have you been teaching full time in any setting? | | |
| 3. How many years have you been a full time online teacher? | | |
| 4. How many years have you taught full time in a traditional bricks and mortar classroom setting (as a teacher, special instructor, or aide)? | | |
| 5. What is your highest level of education completed? In what year did you complete the degree? | Bachelors | Masters | Doctorate |
| 6. What type of teacher preparation program did you complete? In what year did you complete the program? | Four Year College or University | Bachelor’s Plus Education Program | Master’s Program | Alternative Pathway |
“The mission of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) is to ensure all students have access to a world-class education and quality blended and online learning opportunities that prepare them for a lifetime of success. iNACOL is a non-profit organization focused on research; developing policy for student-centered education to ensure equity and access; developing quality standards for emerging learning models using online, blended, and competency-based education; and supporting the ongoing professional development of classroom, school, district and state leaders for new learning models.” (www.inacol.org)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The online teacher develops and delivers assessments, projects, and assignments that meet standards-based learning goals and assesses learning progress by measuring student achievement of the learning goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The online teacher demonstrates competency in using data from assessments and other data sources to modify content and to guide student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The online teacher interacts in a professional, effective manner with colleagues, parents, and other members of the community to support students' success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The online teacher arranges media and content to help students and teachers transfer knowledge most effectively in the online environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standards developed by:
Abstract: Preparing K-12 Teachers to Teach Online
Katherine Brecheisen, Ashland University

The purpose of this study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment. I would like to conduct a survey with all full time virtual teachers from the schools. The survey will take place in May 2015, with the review of data, findings, and results being conducted in the summer of 2015. Only teachers will be involved in the survey (no students) and it will be anonymous. Anonymity will further be protected as the school will not be named in any of the publications. The research audience will include those interested in academic reading of virtual schools or teacher preparation. The research will be published as my doctoral dissertation through Ashland University, and possibly as academic writing in the future, should the opportunity present itself. I am hopeful this research will contribute to the field of teacher preparation as the charter school movement continues to expand, in particular alternative virtual environments. I am also hopeful that the current virtual programs will find the results useful in planning professional development for current virtual teachers.
Some minor comments attached, otherwise these look good to use. Please cc me on the e-mails that you send out. No problems with the timeline; you may want to consider stretching it out a little longer. You only need to send out the Appendix E Letter to the head of the school (see attached list—it’s either the Principal, Executive Director, or Lead Administrator, or CEO in case of CCA).

Good luck! Let me know if you have any questions or receive any concerns in the meantime.

Sincerely,

Greg Matvey

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From: Katie Brecheisen
Sent: Wednesday, May 06, 2015 4:47 PM
To: Gregory Matvey
Subject: RE: Research Proposal

Hi Greg,

Here's what I have:

1. Attachments

These are the emails I would like to send out. I just attached as they are written to be Appendix D, E, F (for easy identification for you). They will be in the body of an email and not attachments.
Appendix D - This email is the initial one I will send teachers about the study - no survey yet.

Appendix E - This email is the one that will contain the survey (3 days after Appendix E)

Appendix F - This is the email I will send to admin in advance informing them of what I would like to begin.

2. Timeline

My ultimate goal....

**Have you approve this tomorrow, Thursday, 5/7/15** (sorry for the short notice).

Send Appendix F on Friday, **5/8/15**.

*Can I send just to the "school leaders" distribution list or do I need to also send to the "school administrators" distribution list?*

Send Appendix D on Monday, **5/11/15**

Send Appendix E on Thursday, **5/14/15**

Send a short follow up reminder on Thursday, **5/21/15**

Send a *short, final* follow up reminder on Tuesday, **5/26/15**

The survey will close on Thursday, **5/28/15** (Two full weeks of data collection).

**If you can give me the go ahead... I will move forward.**

Thank you again for all your help and support.

*Katie Brecheisen*
From: Gregory Matvey  
Sent: Friday, May 01, 2015 1:52 PM  
To: Katie Brecheisen  
Subject: RE: Research Proposal

Sorry for the delay in getting back to you. No problems with Survey Monkey. Use of the distribution list should not be a problem. You do not need to survey the principals and admin. What I had in mind was just to contact them a few days ahead of time letting them know that you are reaching out to teachers with a voluntary survey to support your dissertation work. Include me on that e-mail as well. You will want to note that it is not a survey instrument although your project has been approved by (they are hit with a lot of corporate surveys during the year).

I can’t imagine anyone would have a problem with their teachers participating, but given the number of schools involved, it’s a good idea to reach out to them first. I would suggest sending that; wait a few days for any feedback and if no one has contacted you back with concerns by that point, go ahead and contact the teachers.

Greg

From: Katie Brecheisen  
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 4:59 PM  
To: Gregory Matvey  
Subject: RE: Research Proposal

Greg,

First, THANK YOU so much!!! I am really looking forward to getting the next phase of my project going.

I will check in with my advisor regarding the suggested changes.

For the data collection, I am planning to use survey monkey for my survey and will be emailing the link out.

I had anticipated just using the distribution list for "All Teachers". I am certainly open to a suggestion if you know of something better.

I had not planned to send the survey specifically to principals first. I do plan to first send and informational email then a three days later information with the survey link. If you would like I could send that initial informational email to all principals as well?
I do like the idea of including in my informational and survey emails that corporate has approved and adding you as an additional contact for concerns. I'll run the updates by my advisor and will send you the communication for approval before I move forward with actually "doing" anything.

Thanks again,

Katie Brecheisen

From: Gregory Matvey  
Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2015 9:59 AM  
To: Katie Brecheisen  
Subject: Research Proposal

I am writing to inform you that the Research Review Committee has reviewed and accepted your proposal to conduct research with teachers.

The Committee would like to suggest the addition of two questions which may be useful:

(1) ask for grade levels taught and (2) ask for information on other courses/programs taken that involved training to teach virtually.

However, we understand that your questionnaire may be locked down at the moment and these additions may not be feasible (i.e., consider them a friendly suggestion and not a requirement).

I would also like to add that we are very interested in the results of your survey (particularly the Instruction team and the Research/Assessment team) and we would like to ask for a copy of your dissertation when it’s completed and/or invite you to present the results of your survey to these teams after you have the results analyzed.

Moving forward, I did have several questions:
How is the survey being administered (i.e., I’m assuming online—Survey Monkey, vo Vici, etc.)?

How are teachers at other schools being contacted? I will admit that when you first sent this along I did not read it closely enough and assumed you were working with teachers only. CA-wide is not a problem but I do want to verify the means of contacting teachers at other schools (e.g., direct contact or are you contacting principals first) and I would like to ask that you send along the communication you are using for review before it’s sent out (I will turn it around it back to you within 24 hours). Basically, we want to make sure that there are no cross-school communication issues and that is clear within the e-mail that your study has been approved at the corporate level and they can contact me if there are any overriding concerns.

Sincerely,

Greg Matvey, Ph. D
APPENDIX C

HUMAN SUBJECT REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
TO: Katherine Brecheisen and Dr. James Olive  
FROM: Carol Reece, HSRB Chair  
DATE: April 17, 2015  
SUBJECT: Human Subjects Review Board Approval  
PROJECT TITLE: Preparing K-12 Teachers for Online Instruction  
HSRB APPROVAL CODE: 04-09-15-#082

The Human Subjects Review Board has approved your research study. You may proceed with the study as you have outlined in your proposal. The approval is granted for one calendar year. Research participant interaction and/or data collection is to cease at this time, unless application for extension has been submitted and approval for continuance is obtained.

The primary role of the HSRB is to ensure the protection of human research participants. As a result of this mandate, we ask that you adhere to the ethical principles of autonomy, justice, and beneficence. We would also like to remind you of your responsibility to report any violation to participant protections immediately upon discovery. Likewise, we would like to remind you that any alteration to the research proposal as it was approved cannot move forward. Any amendment to the application must be submitted for approval before the project can resume.

We wish success in your discoveries,

Carol S. Reece DNP, APRN, CPNP  
Ashland University  
Chair Human Subjects Review Board
APPENDIX D

SURVEY EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS
Upcoming Teacher Survey

Katie Brecheisen

Sent: Friday, May 08, 2015 9:52 AM
To:
Cc:

Good Morning!

My name is Katherine Brecheisen and I am working on my doctorate at Ashland University. For my dissertation topic I am focusing on teacher preparation for the online environment. I have submitted a request to conduct my study to the Research Review Committee with they have approved my proposal!

I wanted to touch base with the school leaders to let you know what I am working on before I get started.

Next week I will be sending a survey to your teachers and asking full time teachers, who are willing, to participate. The survey is anonymous; it collects only a little background information and teacher opinions regarding their own preparation and thoughts on the iNACOL Standards for online teaching. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes to complete, and during field testing participants averaged about 15 minutes to complete the survey.

This survey is completely voluntary and no teachers or schools will be identifiable to me or in the results. This is not a survey; it is for my university based research project.

If you have any questions regarding the project or any objections to the participation of your staff please contact Greg Matvey, Senior Director of Research and Assessment and/or myself.

Thank you in advance,

Katherine Brecheisen

Greg Matvey
Senior Director of Research and Assessment
Graduate Study Survey Information
Katie Brecheisen

Sent: Monday, May 11, 2015 5:43 PM
To: 
Cc: 

Good Evening Teachers!
My name is Katherine Brecheisen and I am working on my doctorate at Ashland University. For my dissertation topic I am focusing on teacher preparation, and I need your help! I would like to ask you to participate in my research study by taking a survey. The survey will take place online and you will be sent a follow up email in 3 days containing a link to the survey.

A. Purpose and Background
The purpose of my study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment. I became interested in this topic through my own work with hiring teachers for a virtual school as well as my interest in higher education and preparing teachers. Currently there is a lot of interest, through the media and recent research, with teacher evaluation, student performance, and the linking of the two. My goal is to find out more about the preparation you have received and how well you believe it has prepared you to meet online teaching standards. For this study I will be using the iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching (2011). I will also be gathering information on your perception of the standards and whether or not they reflect the necessary skills needed to be successful as an online instructor. If you would like to review the standards prior to the survey you can find the document at: http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/iNACOL_TeachingStandardsv2.pdf.

B. Procedures
If you agree to participate the following steps will occur:

1. I will provide a survey link via email and you will have two weeks to complete the survey.
2. During the survey you will be asked to share demographic information, including your teaching experience, the type of degree you hold, and the type of teacher preparation program you participated in. I will also ask that you rate how prepared you believe yourself to be to meet each of the online teaching standards and ask that you rate your perception of the standards and their application to being a successful online teacher.
3. The survey will be anonymous and should take less than 30 minutes to complete.

Participation is completely voluntary. While participation in this survey is very much appreciated, it is not required in any way. By participating in the survey you will be giving consent for me to use the information provided in my research study. No identifiable information will be collected and therefore will not be shared. If you decide to participate, please know the research study, and your participation, has been approved by the Department of Research and Development.

Should you have any questions or concerns prior to taking the survey, during the survey, or following
your participation please contact me or my advisor and the Research and Assessment at:

Katherine Brecheisen

kstrouse@ashland.edu

Dr. Jim Olive, Professor

401 College Ave.
Ashland, OH 44805
jolive@ashland.edu

Greg Matvev, Senior Director of Research and Assessment


Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Katie Brecheisen
Good Morning Teachers!

On Monday I sent an email describing a research project I am working on for my dissertation, through Ashland University. I am now providing a link for any full time online teacher who is willing to participate in this anonymous, optional survey.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TP5LBTK

Below I am again including the information about the project and the survey, as well as my contact information, and an updated link to the iNACOL standards. If you have any questions, please contact me. Thank you in advance for helping me to gather this information.

Sincerely,
Katherine Brecheisen

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**Study and Survey Information**

**A. Purpose and Background**

The purpose of my study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment. I became interested in this topic through my own work with hiring teachers for a virtual school as well as my interest in higher education and preparing teachers. Currently there is a lot of interest, through the media and recent research, with teacher evaluation, student performance, and the linking of the two. My goal is to find out more about the preparation you have received and how well you believe it has prepared you to meet online teaching standards. For this study I will be using the iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching (2011). I will also be gathering information on your perception of the standards and whether or not they reflect the necessary skills needed to be successful as an online instructor. If you would like to review the standards prior to the survey you can find the document at:

http://www.inacol.org/resource/inacol-national-standards-for-quality-online-teaching-v2/

**B. Procedures**

If you agree to participate the following steps will occur:

1. I will provide a survey link via email and you will have two weeks to complete the survey.

2. During the survey you will be asked to share demographic information, including your teaching experience, the type of degree you hold, and the type of teacher preparation program you participated in. I will also ask that you rate how prepared you believe yourself to be to meet each of the online teaching standards and ask that you rate your perception of the standards and their application to being a successful online teacher.

3. The survey will be anonymous and should take less than 30 minutes to complete.
Participation is completely voluntary. While participation in this survey is very much appreciated, it is not required in any way. By participating in the survey you will be giving consent for me to use the information provided in my research study. No identifiable information will be collected and therefore will not be shared. If you decide to participate, please know the research study, and your participation, has been approved by the Connections Education Department of Research and Development.

Should you have any questions or concerns prior to taking the survey, during the survey, or following your participation please contact me or my advisor and the Senior Director of Research and Assessment at:

Katherine Brecheisen

kstrouse@ashland.edu

Dr. Jim Olive, Professor

401 College Ave.
Ashland, OH 44805
jolive@ashland.edu

Greg Matvey, Senior Director of Research and Assessment

Katie Brecheisen
Graduate Study Survey Link - Still Open

You replied on 5/27/2015 9:59 AM.

Katie Brecheisen

Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2015 10:58 AM

To:

Cc:

Good Morning,

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to fill out my survey about online teaching. This is just a friendly reminder the survey is still open and will remain open for the next week. The survey is ANONYMOUS and completely VOLUNTARY!

If you are a full time online teacher and you haven’t had a chance to fill it out yet, here is the link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TP5LBTK

Additional information is included below. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

THANK YOU!!
Kate Brecheisen

Study and Survey Information

A. Purpose and Background

The purpose of my study is to explore the preparation of teachers for the online teaching environment. I became interested in this topic through my own work with hiring teachers for a virtual school as well as my interest in higher education and preparing teachers. Currently there is a lot of interest, through the media and recent research, with teacher evaluation, student performance, and the linking of the two. My goal is to find out more about the preparation you have received and how well you believe it has prepared you to meet online teaching standards. For this study I will be using the iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching (2011). I will also be gathering information on your perception of the standards and whether or not they reflect the necessary skills needed to be successful as an online instructor. If you would like to review the standards prior to the survey you can find the document at:

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Participation is completely voluntary. While participation in this survey is very much appreciated, it is not required in any way. By participating in the survey you will be giving consent for me to use the information provided in my research study. No identifiable information will be collected and therefore will not be shared. If you decide to participate, please know the research study, and your participation, has been approved by the Department of Research and Development.

Should you have any questions or concerns prior to taking the survey, during the survey, or following your participation please contact me or my advisor and the Senior Director of Research and Assessment at:

Katherine Brecheisen

kstrouse@ashland.edu
Dr. Jim Olive, Professor
401 College Ave.
Ashland, OH 44805
jolive@ashland.edu

Greg Matvey, Senior Director of Research and Assessment
Good Morning!!

I promise this is the last email you will get about my survey!

I wanted to thank all of you who have taken time to fill out the survey - it is a HUGE help to me and I am excited to work with the data.

The survey will remain open through midnight tomorrow (Thursday, 5/28), so if you haven’t had a chance and still want to fill it out there’s a little time left! As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TP5LBTK

I realize it is a very busy time of year, and again thank you for taking the time to contribute to my research!!

Have a great summer,

Katie Brecheisen