NEGOTIATING A CURRICULUM BALANCE: PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS REGARDING ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS IN OKLAHOMA

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Graduate College of the
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in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
December, 2015

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PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

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ASSESSMENTS IN

OKLAHOMA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost for their continuous support and unconditional love in all of my endeavors I would like to thank my parents, Linda and Richard Modenbach. They have always been in my corner encouraging, cheering, supporting and guiding me throughout all of my educational dreams and endeavors.

My brother, Mike Modenbach, for all of his encouragement, tech support even at odd hours and the countless times he has saved the day by fixing my computer at the last minute.

My cousins, Julie and Jack and their families for giving me time in their homes to write and their constant encouragement, words of wisdom and understanding.

My friends especially, Aimee, Katie, Elaine, Elana, Tara and Michelle who have encouraged me when I felt like giving up and understood when I canceled plans so I could write, edit, research and revise my dissertation.

I can't go without mentioning and thanking Dr. Brown for providing me with countless hours of support, guidance, encouragement, and feedback throughout this process. My dissertation committee for their dedication and for providing valuable feedback at crucial times.

From the moment I began this journey, I have had many supporters, several who will not get to see me complete this journey. My grandma Stringer was always my cheerleader, inspiration and task master and my Aunt Jacque who always offered guidance and constructive criticism.

I hope through the stories, data analysis, and discussion portions of this dissertation you will be able to walk a minute in the lives of individuals with severe and profound disabilities as well as in the lives of the teachers and administrators.

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Date of Degree: DECEMBER, 2015

Title of Study: NEGOTIATING A CURRICULUM BALANCE: PERCEPTIONS OF SPCECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS REGARDING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS IN OKLAHOMA

Major Field: EDUCATION

Abstract:

This qualitative study sought to understand how teachers and administrators navigate the state and federal requirements for students with severe and profound disabilities in regards to alternate standards and assessments. Special education teachers must balance the required curriculum while continuing to meet the physical and emotional needs of students with severe and profound disabilities. Seven special education teachers and three administrators were interviewed individually in non-school settings, usually coffee shops. Teachers and administrators work diligently each day to support the students and meet their academic, social, emotional and physical needs.

During the research and data collection phases of this study the stories that emerged illuminated the daily dedication, compassion, and perseverance of the teachers. The researcher used a constructivist perspective and Ethic of Care theory (Noddings, 2006) to analyze data. Data analysis revealed emergent themes including: frustration, unreasonable expectations, balance of competing expectations, time balance, assistive technology and oppression and Othering.

Teachers feel pulled between following the state and federal requirements while also meeting the needs of the students they serve. The alternate standards and assessments often do not fully inform the teacher or parent regarding the process the student is making because the standards and assessments are unachievable to the student being assessed. Implications include the need for providing more training for teachers aligned to the assessment and standards with a continuum of specific strategies for each standard allowing teachers to better balance the planned curriculum with the functional level of each student and changing the expectation from a competitive structure to tracking individual progress.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> *For those of us in public education a shift that must be aggressively pursued is abandonment of our single-minded emphasis on an assessment model that relies almost entirely on measures of student status at a single point in time to a more balanced approach that also values student growth over time (Wilson, 2007 p. 1).*

Educators are under much scrutiny to produce students prepared to work in a global economy. The most recent attempts include additional accountability requirements for schools, additional testing for all students, core curriculum standards, and a focus on data driven decisions and highly qualified teachers (No Child Left Behind Desk Reference, 2002, p. 13). Even though states are applying for and receiving waivers for accountability measures, expectations remain high. "A fundamental motivation of this reform is the notion that publicizing detailed information on school-specific test performance and liking that performance to the possibility of meaningful sanctions can improve the focus and productivity of public schools" (Dee & Jacob, 2010, p. 149). As requirements tighten for general education, additional regulations also affect students with disabilities. The growing achievement gap between general education and special populations including special education is becoming increasingly evident. The day of leaving students who have

disabilities out of mainstream education is over and the discussion of how to reach the students with disabilities has occurred throughout the history of education.

The No Child Left Behind legislation mandated all students including those with disabilities be on grade level by 2014 (Growth Model, 2008). Students with all degrees of disabilities and classification of disabilities have been affected by this mandate. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines thirteen categories of disabilities (IDEA, 2004). Disabilities can also be delineated by the severity of the disability as well as the amount of services the student requires to receive a free and appropriate public education. Table 1 provides a visual description of the types of disabilities as well as the severity of the disability.

Table 1
Continuum of Disabilities

	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Profound
Autism	X	X	X	X
Deaf-Blindness		X	X	X
Developmental delay (suspected disability listed	X	X	X	X
Emotional Disturbance	X	X		
Hearing Impairment including Deafness	X	X	X	X
Intellectual Disabilities	X	X	X	X
Multiple Disabilities (at least two other disabilities, i.e. Autism and SLI)			X	X
Orthopedic Impairments	X	X	X	
Other Health Impairment	X	X	X	
Specific Learning Disability	X	X		
Speech/Language Impairment (SLI)	X	X		
Traumatic Brain Injury	X	X	X	X
Visual Impairment including Blindness	X	X	X	X

Students with disabilities are described as either having mild to moderate or severe to profound disabilities. Mild to moderate disabilities include those students who have such disabilities as speech language impairments, learning disabilities, other health impairments

and emotional disturbances (Reschly, 1996). Students with mild to moderate disabilities are often served in the general education classroom and may receive some intensive intervention from a special education teacher for up to a few hours a day (OSDE Policy and Procedure Manual, 2007). These students are generally verbal and can access printed material with or without accommodations.

Categories in Special Education

Federal legislation defines fourteen categories in special education for states to use when developing policy and procedure manuals to guide services for students with disabilities (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2012). The current terminology in Oklahoma is aligned with states in the region. Students with the special education categories of multiple disabilities, intellectual disabilities (formerly known as mental retardation) and autism are most often described as students with severe and profound disabilities or significant cognitive disabilities. The terminology and categories of 'severe and profound disabilities' and 'significant cognitive disabilities' are used interchangeably in the research to refer to the same population of individuals (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2013).

Students with severe and profound disabilities require intensive supervision and supports. A classroom serving students with severe and profound disabilities has multiple aspects incorporated within the room. Some of the components include job tasks, crushing aluminum cans for recycling, shredding paper for the school, folding shirts from the laundry, academic learning, fine motor, and gross motor. A student with severe and profound disabilities requires many services to be able to function at some independent level. Students with severe/profound disabilities often require related services including occupational

therapy, physical therapy, speech/language therapy, assistive technology, nursing services, transportation, and paraprofessional assistance. "People with severe disabilities are those who traditionally have been labeled as having severe to profound cognitive impairments or intellectual disabilities" (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2013). Often students with severe to profound disabilities are served in a special education classroom and receive an alternate curriculum to better meet their academic needs in Oklahoma. The type of setting these students are provided services in various from state to state and even district to district. In the surrounding states to Oklahoma including Oklahoma, Arkansas and Colorado provide schooling at the child's home school or as close as possible. Missouri provides services for students with severe and profound disabilities at special schools throughout the state (Missouri Department of Education, n.d.). In Oklahoma students with severe and profound disabilities are served in special education classrooms and receive the alternate curriculum to better meet their needs.

Not only is the terminology confusing regarding student disability types, but this confusion extends to special education certification as well. Oklahoma teachers may hold two types of certification, "categorical and mild/moderate or severe/profound/multiple disabilities" (OSDE Policy and Procedure Manual, 2007, p. 186). Currently, teachers are certified in more general terms while students have a categorical identification, specific disability type. Students are categorized according to the type of disability they display, for example, autism, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, or multiple disabilities.

Students with autism have a variety of needs including communication, academic, and social skills. Autism has a continuum of severity including those with moderate needs to severe support. Autism has key eligibility indicators to qualify for special education services

in Oklahoma, including "impairments documented in both communication and social interactions that adversely affect educational performance" (OSDE Policy and Procedure Manual, 2007, p. 81). The phrase "adversely affecting educational performance" generally describes a student who is not successful in the classroom and requires additional support to be in the educational setting. Intellectual disability (formerly mental retardation) "manifests during developmental years" (OSDE Policy and Procedure Manual, p. 89).

Students with intellectual disabilities have a lower-than-average IQ and can have below-average skills in communication, independent living, adaptive skills, and academic performance. Key eligibility indicators of intellectual disabilities include being "at least two standard deviations below the mean on both cognitive measures and with significant deficits in adaptive behavior" (OSDE Policy and Procedure Manual, 2007, p. 89). Individuals with intellectual disabilities have a below-average intelligence quotient (IQ) and perform well below what would be expected of a student of the same age with a normal IQ.

Students with multiple disabilities have at least two significant disabilities including major health issues, physical disabilities, communication disorders, hearing disorders, severe cognitive impairments, severe autism, and vision impairments among other categories. The category of multiple disabilities is described as, "Two or more concomitant disabilities, the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments" (OSDE Policy and Procedure Manual, 2007, p. 90). Teachers who serve students with disabilities use the categorical term interchangeably, with the general terms of mild/moderate and severe/profound. Typically, *severe and profound* refers to a group of students requiring significant academic, social, and physical support at school.

Relevant Legislation

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) mandates all special needs students be working toward grade level including students with severe and profound disabilities, including taking assessments with grade level content (IDEA, 2004). This category includes students with multiple disabilities, intellectual disability (formerly known as mental retardation), and autism. The severity of the disability is determined by the amount of services the child needs to be successful in the school environment as well as the amount of related services (occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech/language therapy, nursing services, and transportation) the child requires. Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, and Orfield (2004) comment, "The gains required by the law far exceed those documented for any major educational reform program" (p. 6). Additionally, federal dollars were to be allocated to schools to assist in meeting high expectations; however, funding has actually been reduced in recent years and fewer funds have been available with the increasing demands of NCLB. In *What Do You Mean by Learning?,* Sarason (2004) outlines major inconsistencies in the legislative effort to reform schools through additional standardized testing. Test scores alone are not necessarily indicative of a child's success or failure, nor do test scores accurately reflect what a student has learned over the course of a year. According to Sarason (2004),

> Knowing a child's test score tells us absolutely nothing about the context of learning and the role of the different factors which are endogenous to the learning process and experience, and without which a test score is unrevealing unless it leads us to determine which factors in the learning context played how much of a role. (p. 7)

A single test taken in the spring does not give a complete picture of a child's learning for the year, but that system is being used to determine student growth and school effectiveness in this country at this time.

Accountability

In this current era of increasing accountability, preparing students for a global economy and increased assessments, one of the most compelling questions is how to best meet the needs of every learner. Adding to the uncertainty, "Each state sets its own definitions of what student content knowledge and skills need to be demonstrated to be *proficient*" (Blank, 2011, p. 4). Nationwide attention to what students should be learning has drawn increased public interest. However, each state develops a method for assessing students with the most severe cognitive disabilities, and each state has a specific method aligned to the state's testing program. Thurlow, Lazarus, Thompson and Morse (2005) write, "Tremendous diversity exists in the criteria that states use to make decisions about participation in statewide assessment" (p. 234). This diversity adds to the confusion in comparing state alternate assessment programs and hints at the variety of alternate assessment programs across the nation. While national perspectives about teacher and administrator views of alternate assessments and standards could provide a more comprehensive overview, an analysis of one state's situation may provide a deeper view. For the purpose of this dissertation, the practices of only one state, Oklahoma, will be analyzed.

In Oklahoma, students with severe and profound disabilities are assessed using the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP). The OAAP consisted of a portfolio assessment based on performance level descriptors located in the Curriculum Access Resource Guide- Alternate (CARG-A), until the 2014-2015 school year. During the 2014-

2015, school year Oklahoma adopted a new assessment for students with severe and profound disabilities. The new assessment is called Dynamic Learning Maps, DLM. The portfolio assessment allowed teachers to create each task that aligned with each item descriptor. This process took many hours for teachers. "The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Alternate Assessment System uses learning maps that are highly connected representations of how academic skills are acquired as reflected in research literature" (Dynamic Learning Maps, 2015).

The CARG-A is a set of alternate standards based on the state standards. In special education, teachers often refer to the skills or curriculum used as *functional.* Functional skills focus on community access and life skills, and often "functional curriculum guides were viewed as catalogs from which to select priority skills" (Browder, Flowers, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Karvonen, Spooner & Algozzine, 2002a, p. 5). Functional curriculum skills help students meet their basic needs to be as productive and independent as possible, given their particular disabilities. Special education teachers struggle with what to teach, balancing the required content-based curriculum and what each student needs in a practical, individualized sense. Teaching each child the necessary skills to make him/her as independent as possible is another struggle teacher's face each day. As Taba (1962) maintains, "A curriculum is essentially a plan for learning," consisting of "selection and arrangements of content" (p. 76), but in working with students identified as severe/profound, both the plan and the content are difficult to establish. Students receiving special education have been required under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation to follow the same planned curriculum as nondisabled peers (IDEA, 2004, NCLB, 2002) with appropriate modifications and accommodations.

Curriculum

In Oklahoma, a prescribed set of standards is provided for teachers to use in the classroom, known as Priority Academic Student Skills (P.A.S.S.). The state standardized tests are currently aligned to the prescribed standards (Oklahoma C3 Standards, 2012). Oklahoma had planned to adopt the common core standards by the 2014-2015 school year, however, the state opted out of the common core initiative. During the last few years the curriculum in Oklahoma has been transitioning while the state develops its own standards to meet the national requirements for preparation of students for a global economy. States are adopting common core standards to provide a common curriculum across the nation for students in K-12 educational settings. In order to help prepare K-12 students to succeed in college and/or career training programs, they claim the standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable, and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Are informed by other top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidenced-based (About the standards, 2012).

Although the state is not adopting common core, professionals are developing standards to prepare students for higher education and the workforce and to be competitive with common core standards. According to the State of Oklahoma Department of Education website, Under House Bill 3399, which was signed into law by Gov. Mary Fallin in June 2014, Oklahoma must have the new standards ready in 2016. Not only will the resulting standards ensure students are prepared for higher education and the workforce, they will reflect

Oklahoma values and principles. The spirit of the process is designed to be as inclusive and as comprehensive as possible, encouraging collaboration and a healthy exchange of ideas. All students will follow the new state standards in 2016 once they are adopted by the state legislature.

Students with severe and profound disabilities have been defined as individuals with significantly limited cognitive ability, often lacking communication skills and independent living skills; additionally, they require around-the-clock assistance to meet their physical, academic and social needs. These students typically follow an alternate set of standards for their prescribed curriculum which is aligned to the general education prescribed curriculum. The prescribed curriculum is the typical curriculum for students. For example, a fourth-grader is required to interpret information and describe how it contributes to their understanding of the text read. In addition to the prescribed curriculum options, several assessment options are available, including the general education assessment with and without accommodations, modified alternate assessments and alternate assessments (portfolios, checklist and interviews). In Oklahoma, the tests consist of Core Curriculum Tests with and without accommodations, and the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP) (Oklahoma State Testing Resources, 2015). The OAAP assessment based on the alternate standard and is demonstrated through Dynamic Learning Maps. Prior to the use of DLM, alternate assessments consisted of performance level descriptors that required documentation to ensure the child achieved the standard with cognitive independence. Typically the documentation includes pictures and videos of the students performing each task independently, along with charting of progress toward the objective. The dilemma of how teachers are to balance the demands of the prescribed curriculum and the functional

curriculum, skills needed to function in society, is not unique, but it is challenging and should be addressed in light of the accountability measures that states, districts, and schools must deal with on a daily basis. Teachers continuously struggle with which aspects of the prescribed curriculum to teach students including those with disabilities. Teachers of students with severe and profound disabilities must manage the prescribed curriculum, functional curriculum, lesson plans, and their perceptions the best interests for each student.

Significance of Study

The climate of accountability affects the entire culture of a school, including its special education program and its severe and profoundly disabled students. Teacher accountability is constantly under a microscope with increasing demands placed on teachers and administrators to have students perform on grade level by scoring at least "proficient" on standardized tests. Legislation has required schools to ensure this proficiency level by the 2013-2014 school year. Failure to meet the requirements has resulted in the United States Department of Education (USDE) encouraging states to apply for waivers to the requirements (ESEA Flexibility). The waiver has many implications to the educational reform process in Oklahoma.

The State Department of Education has set accountability measures along with improved teacher and administrator effectiveness initiatives. The potential changes associated with an accepted waiver from the USDE impact schools and districts in dramatic ways, including districts losing complete control of one or many schools, along with teachers, administrators and support staff losing their jobs. State run schools could potentially use a portion of the district's money to hire national companies to run the school. Domenech (2011) states, "A balanced approach would recognize that failing schools must be

fixed, yet accept the reality that many outstanding school systems and schools in America continue to produce an informed citizenry crucial to our democratic lifestyle" (p. 40). Ironically, NCLB states that children with all types of disabilities are included in the assessment program as well as those enrolled in general education classes (Elledge, Carlson, Le Floch, Taylor, Anderson, O'Day (2009). The range of abilities and the distinct needs of students who qualify for special education vary as much as the types of disabilities and services needed. Students who qualify and receive special education services do not have the same abilities as their peers and indeed, the students who are the center of concern for this study have severe and profound disabilities, often denoting cognitive abilities significantly below those of their peers.

The teachers and administrators who work with this population must negotiate diverse challenges dealing with the multiple issues of each student in their classrooms. In addition to managing the students' immediate physical needs, the teacher may also be teaching grade-level content such as one-to-one correspondence, letter recognition, or the importance of the Civil War. The students who qualify for this category pose a limitation concerning the percentage of students who can score at the proficient level on state assessments. Alternate assessments can equal up to three percent of all students tested in the state testing program. The "three percent rule" can be divided up by the type of alternate assessment determined appropriate by the Individual Education Plan team. Up to one percent of the population may take an alternate assessment composed of a portfolio type examination. Elledge, Le Floch, Taylor, Anderson and O'Day (2009) write,

> The 1 percent rule permits up to 1 percent of students in a state or district who score "proficient" or "advanced" on an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement

> standards to be counted as proficient for purposes of the district's and state's [accountability measure] calculation. This 1 percent rule applies to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (approximately 10 percent of all students with disabilities or 1 percent of all students). (p. 15)

The 1 percent rule can potentially affect a school and/or district's ranking for accountability measures due to more than one percent of the students taking an alternate assessment and scoring "proficient" or "advanced" levels on the alternate assessments. The one percent rule is complicated by another type of assessment (referred to as a modified assessment). Students who take this assessment cannot exceed two percent, so that a total of up to three percent of the students enrolled in special education curriculum in a given school may take and pass an alternate assessment or modified assessment.

This study will explore how teachers and administrators balance the required elements of their jobs and the aspects that meet the needs of each learner. It will also review how teachers and administrators perceive the alternate standards and assessments that are required to be used with all students "with the most significant cognitive disabilities" (OSDE Assessment, OAAP, 2011).

Statement of Problem

Over the past ten years, students with disabilities have gone from being excluded from state-mandated testing in public schools to being required by federal law to be included in all state-mandated testing. Students with mild disabilities, such as a speech delay, were excluded from state-mandated testing, when clearly they were being instructed in the general education classroom and would have been capable of participating in the mandated testing. Students with severe disabilities are now expected to have access to grade appropriate

curriculum and independently show competence on each standard during an assessment as often as non-disabled peers.

When one considers what a student with severe and profound disabilities must give up to have access to the general education curriculum a disconnect often occurs between what the prescribed curriculum and the functional curriculum demand. Students with severe and profound disabilities have functional needs, such as learning how to use the bathroom, feed themselves, and recognize basic danger signs, and now they are required to participate in the grade-level curriculum. For example, an eleven-year old student taking an alternate assessment may have an ability level of a one-year-old and be required to identify the three branches of government, a fifth-grade requirement. As another example, an eight-year-old functioning at a level of a one- year-old might be asked to count to twenty, a third-grade requirement. A teacher in a regular classroom can rely on a standardized assessment developed by a testing company, while a special education teacher using an alternate assessment must create each activity tied to each objective as the assessment for an individual student in Oklahoma, and sixty-one percent of states surveyed in a report on alternate assessments (Cameto, Knokey, Nagle, Sanford, Blackorby, Sinclair, et. al. 2009, p. 85). The balance between the functional and prescribed curriculum is a challenge each teacher faces who educates students with severe and profound disabilities.

Purpose Statement

This study has two primary objectives. First, it seeks to determine how teachers describe balancing, negotiating and interpreting alternate standards and assessments for individuals with multiple disabilities, autism and intellectual disabilities with severe/profound disabilities in Oklahoma. The mismatch between what is expected (the

guidelines) and what is appropriate for the student with severe and profound disabilities is vital to understanding how teacher balance classroom events. It is important to determine how teachers feel about balancing the planned curriculum and the immediate unique needs of each student in their classroom with a functional curriculum. Students with disabilities are being deprived of essential skills to meet the prescribed curriculum requirements. The internal and external struggle associated with the challenge can be overwhelming. Second, the study seeks to understand how administrators balance, negotiate and interpret the alternate standards and assessments for students with multiple disabilities, autism, and intellectual disabilities with severe and profound disabilities. Discovering the balance between maintaining accountability requirements and student basic needs can consume administrators. The population of students with severe and profound disabilities often require extra time and assistance from the administrator ranging from meetings with the individual education plan team to supporting special education teacher while creating activities to meet the exceptional needs of the students. Hopefully, understanding will allow educators to find a balance between the prescribed curriculum and functional curriculum needed to meet the individual goals of each student.

Research Questions

1. How do special education teachers and administrators balance, negotiate, and interpret the alternate curriculum for special education students with severe and profound disabilities regarding the portfolio assessment to assess student progress in Oklahoma?
2. What meanings are teachers and administrators constructing with alternate standards

and assessments regarding their negotiation of the curriculum and assessment challenges?

Understanding the plight of teachers and administrators with regard to alternate standards and assessment will provide insight into the alternate programming schools should offer to students with severe and profound disabilities.

This first chapter has offered varied terms, definitions, examples, and discussion about students with severe and profound disabilities as well as teachers who educate these students. All these classifications point to the reality that a special education teacher must play multiple roles in working with their special needs students. It is important to note that often a teacher may have several students with multiple disabilities, severe autism and intellectual disabilities all in the same room. Each student has individual needs, and meeting all the individual needs within the room is a daily challenge. The following vignette is included to illustrate a typical day for a special education teacher who serves students with severe and profound disabilities:

> *The special education teacher enters her classroom well before the rest of the teachers do for the day. She sanitizes the manipulatives in the classroom; makes sure the tables are ready with individual activities appropriate for each of the ten children in her room for the day; adjusts the visual schedule to include special activities, visitors and daily special classes; then goes to her computer to work on the next IEP, document progress, and check her emails. The paraprofessionals arrive and make sure their documentation is complete from the previous day; check the upcoming day's schedule and start getting breakfast ready for the students. The buses begin arriving at least thirty minutes before other students are allowed to be in classrooms,*

and the day begins. This all happens before 8:00 a.m. The day begins with greeting students, changing diapers, checking backpacks and feeding breakfast to the students; then it is actually time for the planned curriculum to begin; by now, it is at least 8:30 a. m. but usually closer to 8:45. The day proceeds with activities, both group and individual, and then it is time for lunch. Again, the team begins feeding the students their pureed food or other types of individual modifications needed so that the students will not choke. Then it is time to change diapers and take the one student of the ten who can use the bathroom independently. It is now about 11:45 a.m., and the adults can start taking their thirty-minute lunch break. Lunch for the adults will not be over until 1:15 p.m., because it is optimal to have two adults in the room at all times. More individual and group activities, specials, snack, diapers and communication folders finish out the school day. The buses are loaded and the team finishes documentation for the day, cleans up the room, and leaves for home- only to return in a few short hours to do this all again. Between the feedings, diapering, transfers, positioning and caring for the students, the teacher and her team are responsible for teaching academic standards aligned to grade-level standards. The balance between what each child physically needs is combined with what the state and federal government state the child should know before leaving a certain grade level.

The vignette above is a journal entry from a teacher in a classroom with students who have severe and profound disabilities. The final part of this chapter defines some of the common terms used throughout this dissertation.

Definition of Terms

Alternate assessment "Any assessment that is a substitute way of gathering information on the performance and progress of students who do not participate in the typical state assessment used with the majority of students who attend school" (Ysseldyke, Olsen, & Thurlow, 1997, p.2). Alternate assessments can include student work samples, teacher checklist and portfolios.

Alternate standards are aligned to the general education curriculum. The US Department of Education defined, "as an expectation of performance that differs in complexity from a grade-level achievement standard, usually based on a very limited sample of content that is linked to but does not fully represent grade-level content" (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p.52).

Curriculum Access Resource Guide –Alternate (CARG-A) alternate approach to teaching Priority Academic Student Skills (P.A.S.S) (CARG-A Curriculum Access Resource Guide-Alternate, 2009, Cover)

Dynamic Learning Maps "show the relationship among skills and offer multiple learning pathways" (Dynamic Learning Maps Content What is a learning Map, 2014) DLM models multiple paths to achieve same goal. Like a road map, more than one path to reach the objective.

Functional Curriculum A term used by special educators to refer to skills needs to function within a community. Four domains are included in the functional curriculum: recreation, community, domestic, and vocational (Browder, Flowers, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Karovnen, Spooner, & Algozzine, 2004). The functional curriculum is related to the social, emotional,

and cognitive domains. Teachers of students identified with severe/profound disabilities create a functional curriculum for individual students.

Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP) Portfolio Assessment "Is appropriate for children with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The OAAP portfolio is designed for children who are receiving instruction based on alternate achievement of the standards aligned to Priority Academic Student Skills (P.A.S.S)" (OSDE Policy and Procedure Manual, 2007, p. 150). Only one percent of special education students may take the OAAP in lieu of a standard or modified assessment.

Planned Curriculum "selection and arrangement of content, the choice of the learning experiences by which this content is to be manipulated and by which the objectives not achievable through content alone can be attained and plans for the optimum conditions for learning" (Taba, p. 76). These are the plans made by a teacher in advance.

Prescribed Curriculum "the prescribed curriculum provides a basis by specifying certain learning outcomes to be achieved at a specified level within a hierarchical system" Edwards, 2011, p. 40)

Severe and profound disabilities In Oklahoma teachers hold two different types of certification, "categorical and mild/moderate or severe/profound/multiple disabilities" (OSDE Policy and Procedure Manual, 2007, p. 186) It is a classification for students in public education with multiple disabilities, severe Autism, and significantly low cognitive ability.

Summary

Special education teachers face multiple dilemmas every day. The manner each teacher deals with each decision drives every future situation. Perceptions play an integral

role in each teacher's decisions. This chapter explored teacher accountability, relevant legislation, alternate standards, alternate assessments, and teacher and administrator perceptions. The research questions and a definition of relevant terms were included in the chapter. In the next chapter, a detailed literature review addresses topics including a brief history of special education in the United States, various types of curriculum, curriculum and assessments for students with significant disabilities, alternate standards and assessments, and teacher and administrative perceptions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Without sufficient leadership, change stalls, and excelling in a rapidly changing world becomes problematic (Kotter, 1996, p. 144).

Introduction

This literature addresses aspects of special education, curriculum and leadership. The section devoted to the history of special education in the United States focuses on historical background in order to provide foundational understanding. In the general education curriculum section, the focus is on the paths taken to reach the place schools are currently. The section on assessment describes how students with significant disabilities are assessed. The subsequent section provides a summary of the literature focused on alternate standards and curriculum for students with significant disabilities. The section includes an outline for alternate assessments in the United States for students with significant disabilities. In the final portion of the literature review, administrator and teacher perceptions and the function of those perceptions on school initiatives and reform efforts is presented.

History of Special Education in the United States

Special education laws and regulations have progressively changed over the last forty years. Not too many years ago, students with significant disabilities were placed in

institutions and other facilities run by states, never touching the doorstep of the public school. According to Landesman and Butterfield (1987), "In 1967, the mentally retarded population in U.S. public institutions reached a high of nearly 200,000; by 1984, the number fell to about 110,000, a 55% reduction" (p. 809). Students with significant disabilities were not served in mainstream public schools. Many of these students were served in residential facilities because parents were encouraged to send their children away. "Between 1967 and 1982, the bed capacity of community residential facilities increased from 24,000 to nearly 100,000, costing at least three billion in public funds in 1985" (Landesman & Butterfield, p. 809). Individuals with significant disabilities were essentially removed from society and placed out of sight. Most students with significant disabilities are now living at home and often attend their neighborhood school or a public school close to home. The shift from institutions to public schools is a significant transformation affecting all involved. In the following pages, a look to the past helps develop an understanding of the evolution of events that led to serving students with significant disabilities in public schools. Finally, the section discusses the shift to holding students accountable for learning the same content as their nondisabled peers and its effects on teachers, administrators, students, parents, and the community.

Court Cases and Legislation

Knowledge of where we have been as a nation in regard to special education court cases and the following legislation that resulted from many of the court decisions is necessary. Moving forward, several vital court cases are described followed by pivotal legislation which will be outlined. History demonstrates a long pattern of isolating, blatantly ignoring, and Othering individuals with disabilities.

Beattie v Board of Education (1919) sought to include a child who was physically disabled and who also suffered from a nerve condition into the general education setting. Beattie did not have control of his body, drooled, and made unusual noises. The court upheld the school's decision to deny Beattie access to the school because the effect of his "presence on the other students could reasonably be considered harmful to the best interest of the school." *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1951) was the next notable case that attempted to stop racial segregation. Some advocates for special education believe this case also assisted in paving the way for students with disabilities to be included in public schools.

In the early 1970's, two class action cases were filed, with one case, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania* (1971) seeking to educate children with intellectual disabilities in the public school. The case was settled when Pennsylvania agreed to place each child identified as mentally retarded in a free, public program of education. The second case was *Mills v. District of Columbia Board of Education* (1972) with a finding specially referencing the *Brown* decision and its rationale, and concluding that the Board of Education was required by regulations along with federal and district code to provide a publicly supported education for these children.

Othering has occurred throughout history with regards to individuals who differ from the "norm," and the attempt to place individuals with disabilities in special schools, hospitals, institutions anywhere besides public schools has occurred for decades. The phenomenon of Othering is simply the action by which another person is judged "not one of us," while common and commonplace, this distancing technique enabled one to feel

less connected to the Other, and therefore more able to either ignore or take cruel action against someone seen as somehow less human, less worthy (Fook, 2002; Foucault, 1984). The move to accepting those who have been effectively Othered by society in public schools has been a long process and it continues to evolve.

Funding Sources

In 1958, funding was put into place, for training teachers to work with students with disabilities. Four pieces of legislation that laid the ground work for educating children with disabilities include, "The National Defense Education Act of 1958, the Special Education Act of 1961, the Mental Retardation Facility and Community Center Construction Act of 1963 and the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1970 (EHA) reinforcing federal funding of special education" (LaNear & Frattura, 2007, p. 99). These acts and others began providing funding for special education, and that funding may have been paradoxically driven a wedge between regular and special education in a division still apparent today. According to LaNear and Fruttura (2007), "this federal policy direction laid the foundation for-and, in fact, legislatively enacted- assumptions of difference, including a perceived need for students with disabilities to be educated differently and apart from typically developing youth" (p. 100).

On average forty-seven percent of a school's budget comes from state funding (Oliff & Leachman, 2011). Districts have tried to close the funding gap, and Oliff and Leachman, (2011) predict, "with the federal aid now expiring, reductions in state formula funding may be pulling in the opposite direction by reducing funding disproportionately for districts with high concentrations of low-income students." Education funding for students with disabilities as well as Othered populations such as those in poverty receive

additional funding. All education funding sources have been cut, and while some states have not seen significant cuts most states have increased class size.

The annual 2013 budget for special education had a budget deficit of thirty-six percent. In 1977, 197,000 students were served with a per pupil expenditure of sixty-four dollars, while in 2012, 735,000 students were served with a per pupil expenditure of five hundred and seven dollars. (DOE Race to the Top, 2009, p. 25). The figures above illustrate the growing population of individuals with disabilities and the limited resources available. The lack of fully funding special education over the years has affected the services and resources available for individuals with disabilities in schools.

Foundational Legislation

The court cases discussed earlier in this chapter laid the ground work for the legislative acts that will be briefly noted. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first piece of legislation to allow students with disabilities in schools without discrimination. This act stated, "No qualified handicapped person shall, on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives federal funds" (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act). Section 504 did not outline how schools should provide services for individuals with disabilities.

Just two years after Section 504 was enacted, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, passed as the first legislation that required public schools to serve all students with special education needs. Its purpose was to "ensure that all handicapped children have available to them special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs" (Education for All Handicapped Children Act).

EAHCA, also known as Public Law 94-142, "guaranteed a free, appropriate public education to each child with a disability in every state and locality across the country." As the law was reauthorized, additional requirements for including and providing students with special needs supports and services, including transition services from high school to life after high school, were mandated. For example, in 1980, P.L.94-142 mandated states to provide services for students ages 3 to 21, while in 1986, the reauthorization mandated services for children from birth to age 21.

The 1990 reauthorization brought about additional amendments and a name change, as the name of the law became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The amendments at that time included "people first" language and added several additional categories for children with disabilities allowing them to access services in the public school setting. Additional amendments that were part of the 1997 reauthorization required transition services for students leaving high school and entering the adult living world, and called for individual plans linking students to community agencies and resources. According to this strengthening of the law, transitioning planning should begin when a student reaches age 14. The 2004 amendments brought additional changes in requirements strengthening all students' with rights to the general education curriculum. In another example of a paradox, the law intended to improve educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities is now being used to interrupt the practical use of the functional curriculum in order to force attention to general curriculum and standards.

Current Legislation

Since the turn of the 20th century, school reform has been in the forefront of the education discussion. Over the last fifteen years, education has transitioned in several ways including reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Race to the Top reform and Common Core Curriculum. The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) coincided with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which had become known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002. The name change from ESEA to NCLB, ignited the nation to question what was being taught in schools and question why students in the United States were not comparing well against students in other nations. IDEIA and NCLB increased the accountability requirements for students, partly by increasing standardized assessment for all students in both regular and special education classes. According to the National Council on Disability (2005),

> "The purpose of No Child Left Behind is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (p. 18).

NCLB calls for all students, to be proficient in reading and math, including students with disabilities within its assessment schemes. NCLB attempts to close the achievement gap between children.

President Obama signed into law on February 17, 2009, "the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), historic legislation designed to stimulate the

economy, support job creation and invest in critical sectors, including education" (DOE, p.2, 2009). In response to ARRA and the NCLB legislation, the Department of Education released Race to the Top grants for states to compete for funds for innovation and reform. The Race to the Top program is designed to stimulate states to increase teacher and leader effectiveness, promote charter schools and to comply with national standards. In addition, Race to the Top requires states to increase student achievement, close achievement gaps, improve high school graduation rates, and ensure that students are prepared for college and careers. According to the Department of Education Race to the Top, (2009) four areas of reform are emphasized, including: 1)adopting standards and assessments for college and career readiness, 2) provide data driven instruction systems linked to rigorous instruction 3) teacher and administrator recruitment and 4) school turnaround for lowest performing schools (p. 2).

The application for the Race to the Top Fund has comprehensively focused on six broad categories including state success factors, standards and assessment, data systems to support instruction, great teachers and leaders, turning around the lowest-achieving schools and a general selection criteria area. Competition for funds was intense and the states that received funds will serve as models for the rest of the nation (DOE, Race to the Top Summary, 2009).

The National Governors Association, in conjunction with the Chief State Schools Officers, teachers, administrators, and other experts, developed common core standards to ensure the nations' students are college-ready and able to compete in a global economy. Experts developed the common core standards with many experts and support from many agencies to ensure best practices and rigor were included to ensure students'

readiness for college and careers after high school graduation. According to Ryck (2014) concerns have arisen over the development, implementation and assessment of the common core standards. Several states have redrawn from the common core initiative and opted to develop their own standards that are rigorous and aligned to preparing students for the future.

The Common Core discussion did open the dialogue among states, teachers, and administrators regarding curriculum questions focused on rigor, assessments, and planning the best ways to implement standards effectively and efficiently.

Accountability and Instruction

Addressing the issue of inequality in education Dewey (2004) stated, "All reforms which rest simply upon the enactment of law, or threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile" (p. 22). Finding the balance between accountability, achievement, high- quality instruction and remaining true to those with disabilities is a battle that continues, with no conclusion in sight. Many educators, especially special educators, are faced with a multitude of challenges with the reauthorization of IDEA..

One of the biggest challenges facing school administrators is the need to balance NCLB and IDEA, especially since the two laws call in some sense for competing, if not contradictory, results. For example, NCLB is broad- based, while IDEA focuses on the individual, with one of its major purposes, "to provide an education that meets a child's unique needs and prepares the child for further education, employment, and independent living" (National Council on Disabilities, 2005, p. 19). Ironically, the central purpose of IDEA is individualization, but in fact that very emphasis on individualization is

seemingly being lost due to the practical applications of accountability. The mandate for meeting high academic standards is evidenced through assessments and the need to have highly qualified teachers in the content area, not necessarily in the specialization area of the children taught with special needs. The second stated purpose of IDEA is to protect the rights afforded to individuals with disabilities such as free appropriate public education, access to the general curriculum, and being provided services in the least restrictive environment (National Council on Disabilities, p.19).

As administrators and special education teachers were focusing on the requirements of NCLB and IDEA after the reauthorization of both legislative documents at the turn of the 21st century, other experts were turning their attention to the broader goals of preparing students to compete in a global economy, raising standards, developing common core standards and ensuring high-quality teachers and administrators were in every school and classroom. The shift that was occurring in schools across the states seemed to forget an important aspect of education: curriculum.

Curriculum

Curriculum is a broad term encompassing many connotations, terms, theories, and definitions, but understanding the multitude of meanings and related theories increases our ability to meet each learners' needs. "The word curriculum is Latin for a race-course or the race itself- a place of deeds or a series of deeds" (Bobbitt, 2004, p. 11). If this definition for curriculum is accurate it is hardly a wonder that today's education curriculum is continually racing, seemingly out of control, at times. Curriculum takes on many different forms, ideologies, theories and practices. Fleener (2002) acknowledges the notion of curriculum as a complex endeavor when she writes, "Creativity and

openness require approaching and embracing our challenges and difficulties, traveling to the edge, being pushed to our limits, and accepting the chaos with the faith that within the chaos is hidden order" (p. 182).

One way to think of curriculum is as a map, either showing the cities, towns, and roads or topographically with the complexity that is captured through large scale representation. Curriculum cannot be described clearly or easily. Teachers are faced every day with curriculum issues, such as which combination of curriculum to use in the classroom to meet the needs of each learner as well as preparing each learner for the accountability measures, the tests. Teachers must continually question and push to the limits to find order in the potential chaos of educating children, especially those children with severe disabilities.

Smitherman (2005) writes, "curriculum is an open system that retains its vitality throughout its complex relations" (p. 169). Teaching has become a complex system focusing on multiple sources including curriculum, assessments, relationships, and the interplay that must occur to ensure all expectations are met for each student. Within each of the broad terms of curriculum, assessment, and relationships, multiple types of each are theorized and practiced. Teachers use both the planned and the experienced curriculum, while the hidden curriculum also infuses daily practices. Special education teachers choose many of the same types of curriculum as regular education teachers, but have additional curriculum types to address including explicitly teaching aspects of the usually hidden curriculum, along with the planned curriculum, the experienced, the functional curriculum, and the alternate curriculum.

Planned curriculum

The planned curriculum is a map for learning and "not merely a plan for exposition of content; additional considerations emerge regarding sequence" (Taba, 1962, p. 293). The planned curriculum is the course of study the teacher intends to accomplish for the day, week, and year. The teacher uses many resources to determine what should be taught, including state guides, district guides and input from school administration. The planned curriculum is what the teacher intends to accomplish and the method of accomplishing that end is determined based on the documentation. Schools use the planned curriculum as a guide for teaching each standard required on yearly accountability assessments. The planned curriculum is included in documents for each state, and often each school district develops their own planned curriculum. The planned curriculum is frequently developed by those outside the classroom who also have some expertise in the areas.

A professional society will often develop the planned curriculum, but the real question is how teachers are to act on the planned curriculum and how are they expected to act on it. As special education teachers across the state of Oklahoma plan their daily lesson they balance and negotiate the state guidelines and necessary standards for the students to be successful on the assessments. State assessments are given in the spring every year to all students in the state grades third through eighth and high school End-of-Instruction assessments. During the state assessments in Oklahoma, see Table 2, the state requires that schools assess all students in certain subjects and during specific grade levels.

Table 2

Oklahoma Testing Guide Third–Eighth Grades

	Math	Reading	Science	Social Studies	Writing
3rd	X	X			
4th	X	X			
5th	X	X	X	X	X
6th	X	X			
7th	X	X		Geography	
8th	X	X	X	US History	X

Students in high school are required to take End of Instruction assessments and pass at least four of the seven, including English 2, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History, Algebra 2, English 3, and Geometry. The students who do not pass all of the required assessments can still graduate from high school with a certificate of completion rather than a high school diploma.

Experienced curriculum

The *experienced curriculum* is what students actually encounter within the classroom environment described by Barone (1980) as, "those events experienced by a particular student, by a set of students, or by the preponderance of students in a classroom" (p. 30). Teachers and other curriculum planners often overlook the experienced curriculum because of the cultural emphasis on assessments and mastering the prescribed standards. However, the experienced curriculum is potentially valuable classroom tool to assess learning. As students experience the curriculum, their interactions and context of the lesson shape their perceptions about the learning. The experienced curriculum, "is a critique of the manner in which students apparently perceive various aspects of classroom situations and events, and of how they respond to

and help shape, those situations and events" (Barone, p. 30), therefore, attention to what students actually experience is one key to planning for their learning. Occasionally the experienced curriculum provides profound learning opportunities that may or may not be a component of the planned curriculum.

Functional curriculum

A term used to describe one type of special education curriculum is the *functional curriculum.* The functional curriculum targets daily living skills for individuals with disabilities, often with more severe disabilities. The concept developed within the curriculum of special education to better meet the needs of individuals with significant disabilities. During the late 1980's and 1990's "curriculum guides that provided resources for planning functional skills instruction also emerged" (Browder, Flowers, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Karvonen, Spooner, & Algozzine, 2004, p. 212). Teachers were advised to use the guides to prioritize the skills needed for each child. Browder, et. al. (2004) continue, "in contrast to the scope and sequence found in general education curriculum, functional curriculum guides were viewed as catalogs from which priority skills could be selected" (p. 212). This contrast between general education scope and sequence and the functional curriculum guides demonstrates the choice special education teachers must manage and negotiate on a daily basis in their classroom to meet the needs of each student in the classroom.

Hidden curriculum

The *hidden curriculum* is related to the culture of the school, particularly the unwritten and often unspoken rules. School culture is often driven by the hidden curriculum, which may dictate subtly how an individual gets along in a group or even

what it means to be in a group. The hidden curriculum can make it difficult for individuals fit in with certain groups, which can be particularly difficult for students with special needs as the negotiate the culture and shared norms, values, beliefs, traditions, rituals and customs" (Lavoie, 2005, p. 253) that make up a school hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum for many students with disabilities is especially elusive, and if they are not given the opportunity to learn the hidden curriculum, the student may forever be lost in school and society. According to Lavoie (2005), the hidden curriculum has a "significant impact upon the performance, productivity, progress and attitudes of students" (p. 256), so hidden curriculum is a powerful force in schools that can often make or break a student. Jackson (2004) connects the hidden curriculum to potential school failure, writing, "Even when we consider the more serious difficulties that clearly entail academic failure, the demands of the hidden curriculum lurk in the background" (p. 100). Having knowledge of the hidden curriculum is critical for teachers, especially those teachers working with students who have disabilities. Taking time to teach the hidden curriculum within the school is one of many important elements for special education teachers to include in their planning for instruction.

Alternate curriculum

The *alternate curriculum* is a term used by special education teachers, and its meaning has taken on many forms over the years, including a developmental curriculum, a functional curriculum, a combination of the two, and most currently an alternate curriculum aligned to general education standards. It is important to offer a brief description of the previous curriculum forms before discussing the current alternate curriculum. Browder, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Flowers, Karvoen, Spooner, Algozzine (2002b)

helped specify definitions to distinguish the developmental curriculum from the functional curriculums. The developmental curriculum was first used out of necessity to meet the needs of the unique learners who were entering schools in the mid-1970s. The functional curriculum took the place of the developmental curriculum with an emphasis on community access and life skills. "Functional curriculum guides were viewed as catalogs from which to select priority skills" (Browder et. al. 2002b, p. 5) and skills were selected to meet each individual student's needs. The functional curriculum began in the late 1980s and continued into the 2000s.

After the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, students with disabilities were to be taught using standards found in the general education standards. As this paradigm shift began, students with the most significant disabilities were also having a shift in their curriculum. Teachers were now required to access the general education curriculum and to teach the students with all disabilities using the general education curriculum. Controversy arose almost immediately since the type of curriculum used for students with severe and profound disabilities had previously been a different curriculum focused on more functional and developmental standards. Since this shift took place, teachers have been struggling to balance the alternate and functional curriculum needs of their students.

Assessments for Significant Disabilities

In the 1990's, schools began to include students with significant disabilities in general education classrooms. The purpose of inclusion at this time was social interaction. While students were being included with peers without disabilities, educators were struggling with what and how to teach the students with severe disabilities. "States

struggled with whether students with severe disabilities were in a separate functional curriculum or in the general curriculum with adaptations or both" (Browder et. al. 2002b, p.7). Determining what to teach and how to assess what has been taught has been a significant struggle. One reason this task is difficult is the nature of the population and the wide range of capabilities. Kettler et. al. (2010) iterate an important point about the challenge in assessing the population through alternate standards and alternate assessments given the wide range of student abilities and needs, teacher investment and desires in meeting individual needs, as well as the legislative requirements.

Prior to IDEA (1997), schools were not required to assess students with disabilities. As accountability became a large part of school reform, educators realized that a portion of students with disabilities was not being assessed. Kentucky was the first state to implement an alternate assessment option for students with severe disabilities in the early 1990s. Kentucky has been leading the way for alternate assessments since its first implementation. Browder, Spooner, Algozzine, Algrim-Delzell, Flowers, & Karvonen (2003) noted, "When IDEA 1997 required the use of alternate assessments, only one state, Kentucky, had widespread implementation of this process" (p. 45). The alternate assessments are comparable to other state tests given to students. The assessments have undergone much scrutiny for the validity since the assessments are different from other state assessments. Results from alternate assessments must be reported with the same frequency as other assessments in each state (Johnson & Arnold, 2007). By 2006, according to No Child Left behind (2002), students also needed to be assessed in the area of science. Students with severe disabilities must be assessed based on the general education curriculum or a curriculum aligned with general education. As

educational professionals have interpreted the curriculum issue across the nation and within each state, the conclusion in Oklahoma was the crafting of a curriculum based on grade level standards with priorities emphasized for students with the most significant disabilities.

Some education leaders predicted better instruction and higher expectations for students with severe disabilities. Alternate assessments for students with severe disabilities seemed to have some flexibility with the 1997 guidelines; however, the 2004 reauthorization and continued alignment with NCLB increased the limitations on standards taught and assessed. In Oklahoma, special education teachers have been provided with a list of alternate standards that are based on grade level standards. The special education teacher is then required to create activities that assess each standard for each student in the classroom requiring an alternate assessment. It is more frequently a test of endurance for the teacher to complete the alternate assessment rather than a true reflection of the student's actual learning. Alternate assessments have evolved just as the standards have changed. There remains debate about alternate standards and assessments.

Alternate Standards/Curriculum

As states work to create alternate standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities, many are faced with an uphill battle. Quenonomeon (2008) describes this difficult task, commenting, "these standards had to reflect high expectations for this group of students and align with state content standards (p. 14). Many states have created an alternate set of standards for students with severe and profound disabilities that are

closely aligned to general education standards. According to Towles-Reeves, Kleinert, and Muhomba (2009),

> Alternate achievement standards must be defined to meet four conditions: (a) must be aligned with the state's academic content standards; (b) must describe at least three levels of achievement (i.e., basic, proficient, and advanced); (c) must include descriptions of competencies associated with each level of achievement; and (d) must include assessment of cut scores that differentiate between achievement levels. (p. 235)

The alternate standards thus created are now aligned to the alternate assessment that students with severe and profound disabilities are required to take. Since the alternate standards are aligned to general education standards, confusion exists about the place of the functional curriculum. "Although incorporating functional curriculum is not necessarily required for alternate assessment, doing so can provide a way to create meaningful access to academic content areas" (Browder et. al. 2002a, p. 26) within the alternate standards.

Teachers are now teaching students with severe disabilities by using a curriculum aligned to general education standards in each state. One of the challenges is teaching the content so students are learning at a cognitively independent level versus just exposing students to the curriculum. Mere exposure to curriculum does not mean students will be engaged and learning from the materials or classroom activities. Students with severe and profound disabilities typically have difficulty interacting with the materials in the classroom due to physical or cognitive difficulties. Student must be engaged in activities to learn (Roach, Chilungu, LaSalle, Talapatra, Vignieri, & Kurz. 2009).

Another challenge facing teachers who must both instruct and assess students with severe cognitive disabilities is the lack of receptive and expressive communication. Often this population is functioning at a presymbolic level, a level limited in the ability to express their knowledge. Students within this population frequently use some sort of alternate mode of communication. Some alternate modes of communication include pictures, symbols, eye gaze, gesture, and assistive technology. "For students at a presymbolic level, then, teachers must teach the development of symbolic communication through the grade level content" (Towles-Reeves, Kearns, Kleinert, & Kleinert, 2009, p. 252). This added challenge of teaching communication skills to a student who is working on an alternate curriculum just increases the risk of the student acquiring only limited learning on the planned curriculum.

Alternate Assessment

Students with severe and profound disabilities are required to take an assessment as often as their nondisabled peers. Often the standard assessment is too difficult because of the reading level, terminology used, and the lack of physical independence for the student. Because of the student's limited skills, the student needs an assessment that meets their unique learning style. As mentioned earlier in the vignette I provided services for students within the category of severe and profound who have a low cognitive ability, limited physical skills, and often require assistance from an adult to complete simple tasks such as eating, drinking and communicating.

According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2006) alternate assessment, "is an instrument used to gather information on the standards-based performance and progress of students whose disabilities preclude their valid and reliable

participation in general assessments" (p. 4). Deciding how to assess a student with severe disabilities is difficult. Three options are available that meet the requirements for an alternate assessment according to federal law. These options include rating scales, performance assessment, or a portfolio aligned to alternate standards. "A rating scale is used to score a student's response by assessing values to that response. These ratings are based on a scoring tool to ensure consistent scoring across students and raters. Rating scales include numerical scales and descriptive scales" (CCSSO, 2006, p. 12). A performance assessment is a, "form of testing that requires a student to perform a task, e.g., write an essay, design or conduct a laboratory experiment, or maintain a portfolio, rather than select an answer from a pre-made list, e.g., multiple choice items" (CCSSO, 2006, p. 11). Finally, CCSSO (2006) defines a portfolio assessment as:

> A collection of student-generated or student-focused work that provides the basis for demonstrating the student's mastery of a range of skills, performance level, or improvement in these skills over time. A portfolio becomes a portfolio assessment when (1) the assessment purpose is defined; (2) criteria or methods are made clear for determining what is put into the portfolio, by whom and when; and (3) criteria for assessing either the collection or individual pieces of work are identified and used to make judgments about performance. The portfolio evidence may include student work samples, photographs, videotapes, interviews, anecdotal records, interviews and observation (p. 12).

Alternate assessment types vary in format however the core components of a defined criteria and performance indicators are defined prior to the assessment commencement.

The majority of states in the nation are using a portfolio assessment to evaluate students with severe disabilities. In Oklahoma, a portfolio was used until the 2014-2015 school year to assess students with significant cognitive disabilities. The portfolio has evolved into several different forms, including rubrics that teachers fill out to document the child has completed the task, pictures to document the student is actually completing the task, and videos to demonstrate that the child is completing the task with cognitive independence. According to Tindal, Yovanoff, and Geller, (2010), "Portfolios are highly flexible and have the advantage of allowing teachers to customize the kind of tasks being used to demonstrate proficiency and, in the process, rely on behaviors within the student's repertoire" (p. 6). An additional requirement for portfolio assessments is the introduction of performance level descriptors. As performance level descriptors are used with more frequency, the flexibility and ability to customize tasks will continue to be more limited. In Oklahoma, teachers have been provided a list of performance level descriptors, specific standards that will be assessed, and exemplars of activities for each standard. As the regulations regarding alternate standards and assessments have evolved, so have the demands on teachers, administrators, schools and districts.

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year Oklahoma implemented Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) to assess students with significant cognitive disabilities. According to Clark, Kingston, Templin and Pardos (2014), "These maps have important instructional value because they lay out principally derived pathways that teachers can use to arrive at the desired learning objectives from their students" (p. 19). Providing alternate strategies for teaching students with severe and profound disabilities allows teachers to increase the amount of resources available as well as prepare the student and

teacher for the assessment. ”By integrating assessment with instruction during the year and providing a year-end assessment, the DLM system maps student learning aligned with college and career readiness standards in English language arts and mathematics” (Dynamic Learning Maps, 2015). DLM allows students to access the assessments and use assistive technology to complete the assessment. The Dynamic Learning Maps allow for a variety of options to obtain the aligned alternative standards to ensure students with severe disabilities are being provided a similar education to those without disabilities. This system allows for more consistency across the state ensuring students throughout are receiving a more concurrent learning opportunity and assessment system.

The reform surrounding alternate standards and assessments continues to be confusing and frustrating. The struggles have brought about increased education for students with severe and profound disabilities. According to Burke (2008) evolutionary change “is typically an attempt to improve aspects of the organization that will lead to higher performance” (p. 82). Evolutionary change occurs over time, with many struggles and triumphs along the way. Alternate assessments in the United States are currently going through an evolutionary change. As each state continues to modify expectations to meet the national requirements, change is occurring to the alternate assessment model. As these changes occur, the hope is to have students performing at high levels and the assessment reflecting the higher standards.

Teachers and administrators should be questioning whether students are being required to follow the same standard, an adapted standard, a social goal or a functional goal in schools across the nation. As states continue aligning core academic standards and alternate standards for students with severe disabilities, it is important to define what

type of goal is expected to be followed the same, adapted, social or functional aspects. According to Browder, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Flowers, Karvonen, Spooner, & Algozzine (2005), "If students with significant cognitive disabilities are to be included in NCLB, we must define what reading, math, and science means for students who may be learning to use symbolic communication and have no current academic skills" (p. 217). Performance level indicators are used to ensure students are assessed on appropriate skills. "Scoring and task decisions ultimately need to be driven by how proficiency is defined for these students" (Quenonmeon, 2008, p. 22). Many states have struggled with how to meet the student's individual needs while also meeting the requirements of IDEA and NCLB in the area of accountability. Some educators in the field find it reasonable to accept performance indicators that use both a functional curriculum and the general curriculum (Browder, et. al 2004; Kettler et. al. 2010).

Part of the NCLB legislation was a list of goals, one of which is particularly worth mentioning, "by 2014, all students (100%) are expected to meet or exceed proficiency levels" (Zigmond & Kloo, 2009, p. 481). As students with severe cognitive disabilities are assessed within the school accountability system, it is important to point out that only one percent of the students taking an alternate assessment can score proficient, even if more than one percent do score proficient. Zigmond and Kloo (2009) point out an alarming component of alternate assessment commenting,

> No cap was placed on the number of students with significant cognitive disabilities in a district who could be assigned by the IEP teams to take the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards, although only 1%

of students could be counted as proficient based on performance on the alternate. (p. 482)

The cap is in place to limit the number of students who are tested using alternate assessments. It appears that schools and districts with higher than normal populations of students with severe and profound disabilities are being penalized due to the nature of the way scores on assessments are reported and counted. The one percent cap poses a real conflict for administrators and teachers since any scores over one percent are counted as limited knowledge, thus bringing down the school's API (academic performance index). This fact alone makes administrator and teacher perceptions so critical to the education process for the students with severe and profound disabilities.

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions

Roach, Elliot, and Berndt, (2007) state, "There is limited data available on teachers' experience with, and perceptions of, alternate assessments for students with disabilities because it is a relatively new education practice (p. 169). Perceptions can affect values, beliefs, and attitudes about a specific individual or group. Teachers and administrators have a duty to educate all children, and perceptions have a large role to play in the education process. Page (1987) states, "Perceptions are not simply the idiosyncratic notions of individuals, but are shared by faculty member in a school" (p. 77). Teacher and administrator perceptions are often not addressed or considered, especially during school reform efforts. During recent years, the reauthorization of IDEA and NCLB have increased demands for districts, schools, administrators and teachers in the area of accountability but have frequently overlooked the effects of the demands. This means that "perception of impact is not equal to the quantifiable effects of

policy implementation but rather informs participants' views of implementation and beliefs" (Vannest, Mahadevan, Mason, & Temple-Harvey, 2009, p. 148).

Determining how teachers and administrators perceive, value, and implement the portfolio process is essential in determining the value of the alternate assessment. Self-efficacy plays an important role in perceptions. When individuals believe in themselves, they are more likely to share feelings, perceptions and beliefs. "Teaching efficacy was thought to have two distinct components, general teaching efficacy (the belief that external influences can overcome teaching) and personal teaching efficacy (the teacher's beliefs about his or her own capacity to bring about change in students)" (Brady & Woolfson, 2008, p. 529). The process of the alternate assessment requires teachers to reflect within and rely on external influences to interpret how to teach and assess each standard for students with severe and profound disabilities.

Vannest, Mahadevan, Mason, and Temple-Harvey (2009) conducted a study in Texas on educator and administrative perceptions of the impact of NCLB on special populations. The study was limited by the respondents because they varied in the types of students taught within the special education population. The study focused on accountability, parent choice of schools based on AYP, and a lack of knowledge about NCLB legislation concerning teachers and parents input and responsibilities. The results indicated a statistically negative perception for educators in the area of accountability, parent choice and a lack of knowledge. The possibility that instruction in the core classes takes away from valuable time needed to teach functional skills that could lead to a more productive, independent life in the future is seemingly overlooked. Determining the perceptions of teachers and administrators when it comes to educating students with

severe and profound disabilities provides insight and reflection for those working with students who have severe and profound disabilities.

As teachers and administrators assess students with severe disabilities, it is important to determine how the perceptions of the teachers and administrators may affect the outcomes of the assessments. Teachers who serve students with severe disabilities are the ones who compile the required data and information for each student's assessment to demonstrate the student's cognitive independence for each skill. "Since teachers are heavily involved in the portfolio process, it makes sense for researchers to address teachers' issues with the procedures" (Kampfer, Horvath, Kleinert, & Farmer-Kearns, 2001, p. 364). Completing one portfolio for an individual student is often time consuming with teachers reporting spending on average 25 to 30 hours per portfolio (Kampfer, et. al. p. 366). If teachers have to complete four or five portfolios per class and spend 30 hours on each portfolio outside of instruction that equals 150 hours of personal time required to complete portfolios. In contrast with the use of Dynamic Learning Maps assessment teachers take less time with students during the individual testlets however, the practice pathways and additional materials required during the test often require stopping and restarting the assessment with each student. As teachers dedicate multiple hours to the completion of portfolios and other alternative assessments, often administrators are called upon to provide coverage for the classroom to allow the teacher and paraprofessional to work with one student. While the special education teacher is assessing one student, the other students are often being watched and entertained, sometimes with a video, to maintain order with limited adult support.

Special education teachers and administrators are charged daily to address curriculum and assessment trends. The choice used to address challenges has a large impact on how students, teachers, and administrators perform, especially on accountability measures. Efficacy plays a role in teacher and administrator perceptions. The ability to believe in one's talents and skills does affect how the teacher performs and thus how the students perform. When teachers are confident and self-assured they are comfortable with their curriculum and assessment choices. Bandura (2000) states,

> Efficacy beliefs influence whether people think erratically or strategically, optimistically or pessimistically; what courses of action they chose to pursue; the goals they set for themselves and their commitment to them; how much effort they put forth in given endeavors; the outcomes they expect their efforts to produce; how long they persevere in the face of obstacles; their resilience to adversity; how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands and the accomplishments they realize. (p. 75)

Teachers thinking in an optimistic, strategic, goal-oriented manner will likely persevere over those teachers with negative, pessimistic attitudes. "Teachers influence student behavior and student achievement by planning, managing, and instructing in ways that keep students involved and successfully covering appropriate content and skills" (Thurlow, Christenson & Ysseldyke, 1987, p. 23). Teacher perceptions about the learning potential for students often take a life of their own, thus decisions are often based on the perceptions of teachers.

Administrators are faced with many challenges on a daily basis, including special education needs, assessment needs and curriculum. Pazey (1993) states, "Administrative

practice involves a continuum of concern, including federal and state legislation, increased demands for accountability, diminishing resources for education and an increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities" (p. 15). How the administrator perceives the challenges is essential to the effectiveness of the school. Administrators must ensure all students are learning to the highest level possible. Page (1987) states,

> The culture of the school both shapes teachers' understanding of their mode of operation and of students and is grounded in faculty members' shared definitions. It is linked to the larger social order by staff members' shared perceptions of the social class of the school's typical student and of the educational demands of the community. (p. 90)

Administrators must also balance the demands of the school board, state and federal government with the needs of the teachers and the students in the school. Low morale can affect perceptions and could cause teachers to be frustrated with an initiative or reform effort. "Effective schools must be able to demonstrate quality and equity in learning outcomes for students" (Thurlow, Christenson & Ysseldyke, 1987, p. 9). Effective administrators need to understand the perceptions held by the stakeholders and be able to maintain a positive outlook in spite of potential frustration.

Students with severe and profound disabilities have traveled a long road, from being placed in institutions to being served in a public school alongside peers without disabilities. As the legislation and case law have determined, the appropriate placement for students with severe and profound disabilities, teachers and administrators have attempted to stay ahead of the latest mandates. While placements have changed teachers

and administrators' perceptions of the capability of students with severe and profound disabilities all educators perceive this special population positively. Society once believed students with severe and profound disabilities would not amount to anything and did not attempt to provide them an education.

Now students with severe and profound disabilities are in public schools, educated with similar curriculum and even are assessed based on the alternate curriculum aligned with general education curriculum. Students with severe and profound disabilities are expected to follow the planned curriculum, but often their needs fall into the functional and null curriculums. Although some changes from this era of reform have challenged all stakeholders, students with severe and profound disabilities are not being tossed aside and forgotten. The road has been difficult and new challenges will arise but as our nation progresses along the road, students with severe and profound disabilities will not be Othered.

Summary

The literature review included a brief history of special education in the United States I reviewed varied examples of various types of curriculum, curriculum and assessments for students with significant disabilities; alternate standards and assessments; and teacher and administrative perceptions. Through the explorations of the various topics, the groundwork has been laid to understand the issues teachers and students with severe and profound disabilities face. In the next chapter, the methodology for the study will be described in detail. Constructivism and Nodding's ethic of care are the underlying theories used in the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study is designed to understand how special education teachers and administrators working with students with severe and profound disabilities balance, negotiate, and interpret alternate standards and assessments for students with severe and profound disabilities. Duckworth (1996) stated, "Curriculum, assessment, teacher education programs--and all of our teaching-must seek out, acknowledge, and take advantage of all the pathways that people might take to their understanding" (p. xi). The study seeks to understand how educators use and incorporate the alternate assessment and standards in the classroom through the use of narrative inquiry. Teachers and administrators in school districts in the same geographical region consisting of an urban, suburban, and rural area will be invited to participate in the study.

One of the driving questions for the study is, how do special education teachers and administrators balance, negotiate, and or interpret the alternate curriculum for special education students with severe and profound disabilities regarding the alternative assessment to assess student progress. The design of mandated assessments include an assumption that the alternate assessments and standards work since they are aligned to the state standards, but there is an inherent fallacy related to the type of students the

assessments are intended to evaluate. Unfortunately, students with severe and profound disabilities are overlooked because they often do not have a voice in developing or responding to the standards and their individual needs are thus not expressed. In this study, I will analyze how teachers and administrators navigate through the curriculum and assessment jungle for students with severe and profound disabilities. Additionally, "norms, understandings, and assumptions that are taken for granted by people in a setting because they are so deeply understood that people don't even think about why they do what they do" (Patton, 2002, p.111). Educators working with this special population have much to consider when planning the education for children with severe and profound disabilities. The balance between the planned curriculum and the functional curriculum is met by the need to include the hidden and null curricula while students experience the curriculum that will be assessed.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Piaget's theory of constructivism is one of the theoretical frames used in this study. "People must construct their own knowledge and must assimilate new experiences in ways that make sense to them" (Duckworth, 1996, p. 150). As an educator I have observed students and fellow teachers interacting with an object or concept and then finally developing an idea or a new assimilation. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, (1993) states, "multiple realities enhance others' meanings: forcing them to a single precise definition emasculating meaning" (p. 15). Each educator constructs their own perceptions about education including alternate assessment and standards for students with severe disabilities through interaction with others and their

environment. Constructivism serves as the lens through with data analysis is conducted in the present study.

Students with severe and profound disabilities construct their own meanings similarly to infants, for example when an infant cries the adult responds knowing the child needs one of several things food, changing or comfort. When a student with severe cognitive disabilities makes an utterance, groan and eye gaze they are signifying needs, desires and learning. Teachers rely on subtle to assess how students with severe and profound disabilities construct meaning. Students with severe disabilities construct meaning, and teachers do the same; however, the evidence for meaning construction may look very different.

Another perspective driving this research study is based on Nel Noddings' Ethic of Care. Ethic of Care focuses on moral importance when forming relationships. Relationships and perceptions based on those relationships are being addressed in this study. Noddings (2006) states, "the best education increases important differences; it does not aim at uniformity" (p. 339). Education in the United States now under NCLB emphasizes "a one size fits all model," ironically leaving some students out of the learning process. This is happening in special education, gifted education, as well as with students who are at risk in the traditional learning environment. Educators are focused on teaching the planned curriculum and preparing students for the required assessments. Achievement tests require students to memorize facts but do not allow them to critically think about the information (Kamii, 1990), which effectively negates the position of constructivists who see learning as the construction of meaning through critical thinking.

Many educators are caring and compassionate; however, they often get lost in the rhetoric of current education trends. Some educators put testing and accountability measures ahead of the students' needs, while "caring teachers" believe the child is more important than the theory (Noddings, 2006). In the current era of accountability and assessments, it is difficult to believe the child and even the teacher has not been lost in the process. Providing options allows individuals to make professional decisions that fit the specific learning situation. Noddings believes "when we force people to employ specific means, we risk losing the very ends for which the means were chosen" (2006, p. 344). Combining constructivism and ethic of care theories, along with narrative inquiry, the study focused on constructing meaning and the role that caring individuals have in developing outcomes in situations. This study attempts to determine how educators balance, negotiate, and interpret the alternate standards and assessments and what meaning is placed on the assessments.

The use of participant lived experiences through narrative analysis was used in this study. As Riessman (2001) shares, "Storytelling is a relational activity that gathers others to listen and emphasize. It is a collaborative practice and assumes tellers and listeners/questioners interact in particular cultural milieu- historical contexts essential to interpretations" (p. 697). Narrated stories provide a valuable tool to share insights spoken and unspoken of the participants. "Considering occasions for narration allows us to ask how, when, and why certain narratives are told" (Linde, 1997, p. 287). The stories told are an integral component of the data to analyze; however, there are other data points to consider to ensure a complete picture is provided. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) note, "to understand look at a broad range of data to see what was happening,

examine records, interviews and observation" (p. 9). In this study, data was collected from interviews, the researcher journal notes of observations, and an analysis of documents from the State Department of Education to provide content rich and descriptive data. According to Linde (1997), "Social life is not transacted in sentences or even in speech acts. It happens in the exchange and negotiation of discourse units: narratives, primarily, then descriptions, explanations, plans and so forth" (p. 281). The discourse provided details and deepened understanding of the role the teacher and administrator must balance in regards to alternative standards and assessments.

Teacher and administrator interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded repeatedly in order to identify emergent themes. The alternate curriculum for students with severe and profound disabilities in the State of Oklahoma (CARG-A) and the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Portfolio (OAAP) were also analyzed as part of the data that was coded repeatedly. As the participants shared their stories, they were "loaded with embedded, sometimes hidden information" (Feldman et. al, p. 150, 2004) thus providing some indication of possible emergent themes. A written protocol was provided by the researcher to allow teachers participating in the study to express additional ideas and concerns after the conclusion of the interview. It was the hope of the researcher to receive more than a single written protocol from the teachers; however, in not receiving more written protocols, the researcher inferred the value of interactions with participants was based on trust and thus they had already shared their genuine thoughts, stories, and beliefs, making the written protocol request unnecessary to sharing their stories.

Multiple data sources including transcribed interviews, member checks, documents, and written protocol data, were included in this study which strengthened the

findings. Triangulation of multiple data sources strengthens qualitative research findings by comparing and cross-checking the information obtained at different times and by different means (Patton, 2002). The use of multiple sources of information allow multiple perspectives to emerge leading to richer findings so that "each method and source has strengths and weaknesses, and using several methods and sources builds on strengths" (Lapan, 2004, p. 243). Ensuring trustworthiness (Erlandson, Harris, et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is a vital quality assurance for all types of qualitative methodologies, including narrative inquiry.

An educator's perceptions and beliefs are individual and cannot be made into truths, nor do they apply to all educators. We each have to make our own meaning, even if we are told the meaning by someone else (Duckworth, 1996). A constructivist theoretical perspective is being used to inform how educators construct their own beliefs. Educators construct their own understandings based on their own meaning-making events. Constructivism stresses the individual and the meaning the individual makes of situations, even though that meaning construction may happen partly though interaction with others. Fosnot (1989) states, "We can only know it (the world) through our logical framework, which transforms, organizes and interprets our perceptions" (p. 9).

In this study, it was important to better understand how teacher and administrator balance, negotiate, and interpret alternate standards and assessments over making generalizations. The stories that emerged from the educators in this study allow insight into the alternate assessments and standards in the state of Oklahoma. Although there are multiple realities represented by the educators and a consensus was not sought here, understanding the educators "lead(s) to rich awareness of divergent realities rather than

convergence on a single reality" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 12). The shared stories provide some insight into constructed meaning of the alternate standards and assessments in the state of Oklahoma.

Methodology

The goal of this study is to examine how teachers and administrators balance, negotiate, and interpret the prescribed curriculum with the functional curriculum for students with severe and profound disabilities on standardized assessments. To determine this, a qualitative research design was used to include participant interviews, written protocols, document analysis and narrative inquiry. The lived experiences of the participants will tell a story. Hendry (2010) states, "The storytelling traditions of earliest man were narrative inquiries that sought to address questions of meaning and knowing" (p. 72). The interviews and written protocols allowed the researcher to tell the story of teachers and administrators and how these stories describe what is happening with alternate assessments and curriculum. In this study, the researcher conducted teacher and administrator interviews, then transcribed and finally code for themes. In addition, documents related to alternate curriculum for students with severe and profound disabilities in the State of Oklahoma (CARG-A), the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Portfolio (OAAP) and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) were analyzed and coded for themes. A written protocol was provided to allow teachers to express ideas, concerns, and raise unanswered questions remaining from the interview, however, only one protocol was returned. As part of the analysis, the researcher inferred meaning from the return of only one protocol to mean the participants told their stories using as much detail as possible during the interview process. Multiple data sources including transcribed

interviews, document analysis data, researcher journal notes and written protocol data were triangulated in this study which will strengthen the findings. Triangulation strengthened the finding by providing, comparing, and cross-checking the information obtained at different times and by different means. (Patton, 2002).

Description of Procedures

This study is qualitative in nature. The combining of constructivism and ethic of care theories along with the methodology of narrative inquiry allowed the researcher to make meaning with a focus on caring adults and their perceptions of alternate assessments in Oklahoma. Noddings' Ethic of Care theory framed the described struggle special education teachers' encounter because of their strong sense of caring and compassion. The interplay between the curriculum and testing requirements and students' individual needs conceptualized as the functional curriculum is a balance between caring for the individual student's future and the demands of standardization. Special education teachers, building administrators and district level administrators were interviewed using a semi-structured interview method (Appendices A and B). Interviews were conducted after regular school hours or on weekends. The researcher traveled to the participants' location. Confidentiality is maintained by using pseudonyms for participants and their place of work. At the conclusion of the interview participants were given a written protocol to complete anonymously, to allow for them to tell their story while protecting confidentiality. A self-addressed envelope with postage paid for the participants to use was provided with the written protocol. Refer to Appendix C for written protocol questions. The researcher kept field notes during the study to add rich description and details not always provided in the interview alone. A document analysis included as part

of the study reviewed the testing blueprints for the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment, the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment manual, the Oklahoma alternate standard and Dynamic Learning Map Manual for 2014-2015.

Participants

Participants in this study included seven special education teachers and three building level administrators who worked in the public schools in the state of Oklahoma. The researcher used purposive sampling, intended to "maximize discovery of the heterogeneous patterns and problems that occur in the particular context under study" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 82). Participants were initially selected through a convenience sampling by contacting potential participants from special education directors lists via phone, email, or in-person. Expert referral using professional connections including directors of special education and state professional organizations familiar to the researcher was part of the recruitment. After a low response rate a snowball sampling was implemented to attract additional participates. Participants were more readily available to the researcher. Administrators of schools and districts of teachers used in the study were asked to participate based on teacher participant information. Teachers met the following criteria:

1. Hold certifications of severe/profound, autism, intellectual disabilities and/or multiple disabilities
2. Have at least five years teaching experience in special education (some of the years can be as a paraprofessional working with students with severe and profound disabilities)

3. Completion of at least one year of previous OAAP portfolio assessments in the state of Oklahoma

4. Attendance at the state mandated training for Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program

The building administrators met the following criteria:

1. Served at least three years as a building or district administrator in an Oklahoma school (or been a special education teacher previous to becoming a building or district administrator)

2. Have teachers conducting the OAAP assessment in their building or district

Six of the participants were familiar to the researcher, based on the area of the study and the field the researcher has served in for the past twenty years. Participants were given a questionnaire for screening to ensure that each participant met the criteria for participation in the study. An explanation of the study was provided to potential participants and IRB approved consent forms were collected from those willing to participate in the study. The selection of participants may add some bias to the study since the participants will be familiar with the researcher. The researcher has insider perspective to add additional meaning to the narrative provided by the participants in the study.

Data Collection

Data collected includes interviews, document analysis, and a written protocol for teachers and the administrators in the study. Interviews were conducted with participants who agreed to be in the study. The semi-structured interviews produced a dialogue and knowledge evolved through the interviews (Kvale, 1996). In this study, a semi-structured

interview protocol was used with each participant to help collect data in a similar manner, while still allowing for individual attention to particular areas based on the participant's expertise and experiences shared with the researcher. The interviews were digitally audio recorded and immediately transcribed by the researcher after the interview was completed. Follow-up interviews were used as necessary to clarify information given during the initial interview. A member check was used to verify the interviewee's data prior to including the data into the final study.

A document analysis was conducted on the testing blueprints for the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP), the alternate assessment manual, the alternate standards in the state of Oklahoma, Dynamic Learning Maps, and the written protocol used with interviewees, with identification of emergent themes as the focus of this analysis. "The language we speak determines what we experience and in turn is driven by the categories we construct to make sense out of the world we experience" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 22). The documents hold rich, detailed information was not acquired through the interviews or written protocol. The last piece of data collected will be a written protocol. The protocol will also be used to determine teachers and administrator perceptions of the alternative testing and standard process without participants feeling the possible pressure of describing fully the status quo during the interview.

Data Analysis

Data in this study was analyzed by coding, searching for emergent themes. An initial reading of the interview data provided ideas about what I can do with the different parts of the data. These initial ideas were jotted in the margins of the transcriptions.

Open coding was used to open up the text and discover the meaning within the transcribed interviews. Strauss and Corbin (1998) state, "broadly speaking, during open coding, data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences" (p. 102). A line-by-line open coding generated categories within the data. Sentence and paragraph coding were the next step, asking the question Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest, "What is the major idea brought out in this sentence or paragraph?" (p. 120). The data was read multiple times to continue to find themes and categories. Inductive and deductive analysis was used as the data is analyzed and themes emerge. Once coding is complete a member check was conducted to ensure the interviewees agree with the interpretation of the data presented during the interview. Discrepancies were addressed and corrected before the data was further analyzed. A peer review of the research was used to ensure dependability.

The alternate standards (Curriculum Access Resource Guide-Alternate, 2009) and the alternate assessment, Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program, (Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program, OAAP Portfolio, 2011) and the Dynamic Learning Maps Manual documents for Oklahoma were analyzed for themes. Miller (as quoted in Patton, 2002), "text are one aspect of the sense-making activities through which we reconstruct, sustain, contest, and change our senses of social reality" (p. 498). The document analysis was similar to the coding used for the interviews. Initial readings included jottings and ideas of possible themes and categories within the document data. A more thorough reading reviewed themes and those themes were compared to themes from interviews. A challenge of document analysis according to Patton (2002) is "linking documents with other sources including interviews and observations" (p. 499). The researcher solved this

challenge using documents relevant to the study and showing a connection among the documents, interviews, and research journal.

A written protocol used to provide those interviewed a way to express additional thoughts, concerns, or opinions not shared during the interview. "Protocol writing is the generating of original tests on which the researcher can work" (Van Manen, 1998, p. 63). The written protocol had several open-ended questions and the data collected was completely anonymous. Protocol writing is one way to obtain information from participants in a straightforward manner; it allows the participant to write down the experience. The written protocol allowed the participant to reflect on the interview and the lived experience engaging in alternate assessments.

In this study, participants were given the written protocol at the conclusion of their interview. The researcher anticipated receiving at least half of the number of protocols of the people interviewed however, after several follow-ups with participants only one written protocol was received. During the member checks participants revealed that the written protocol questions were answered during the interview and the participants had no additional information to share. The data provided in the only written protocol was analyzed, compared to the themes from interviews and common themes emerged.

Using Noddings' Ethic of Care to analyze the data provided a perspective linked to the "giving of self and receiving of other" (Noddings, 2013, p. 113). The notion that teachers give of themselves provided a strong frame when coding the stories told by the teachers and administrators. Synthesizing the data collected from the various sources provided thick descriptions of teachers and administrators perceptions of the alternate

standards and assessments used with students who have severe and profound disabilities. Interpretation of the data allowed the researcher to answer the research questions. The transcribed interviews, document analysis and researcher journal data was triangulated to increase validity and reliability. Triangulation according to Lapan (2004) "refers to the collection of data from two or more sources (e.g. students and teachers) using two or more methods (e.g., interviews and observations)" (p. 243). Triangulation of the data assists reliability of the study and validity of the study because multiple sources were used when collecting and analyzing the data. Member checks added to the reliability and validity by providing participants had the opportunity to verify the data shared and interpreted by the researcher. Hendricks (2009) states, "when multiple data sources are triangulated and point to the same result, confidence about the accuracy of the results of the study is increased" (p. 155).

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by several factors. Only three participants were interviewed twice limiting the context. The participants came from three types of districts: urban, suburban and rural. Because participants were recruited through professional connections and organizations, researcher familiarity with the participants may be a limitation as well.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting a research study ethical considerations are essential to ensuring participant protection as well as protecting of the data. Three basic principles make up the foundation of human subjects research ethics: respect for persons, beneficence; and justice. The United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, The Belmont Report (1979) defines respect for persons as including that, "that individuals should be

treated as autonomous agents and second, that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection" (p. 4). Another critical principle is beneficence. In research ethics, one key concept is doing no harm and maximizing possible benefits while minimizing possible harms to individuals during research. Justice is the final basic ethical principle to consider for my study. This principle involves reviewing subject selection and ensuring the subjects are treated fairly and equitably.

In addition to following the three basic principles of research, I obtained the Internal Review Board approval prior to beginning my research. The IRB requires a detailed description of the planned study and should include the purpose, procedures, and risks to participants, benefits, confidentiality, compensation, researcher contact information and participant's rights. The risk to potential participants is limited due to the nature of the study. The interviewee may have been experienced some inconvenience in scheduling and meeting for the interview. This inconvenience will most likely be time away from the interviewee's regularly scheduled activities. The benefit of participating in this study will be time to reflect on individual perceptions and practices of the alternate assessment and standards.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an essential component of a naturalistic inquiry study. It is essential because the readers of the study must believe steps have been taken to ensure the data is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. Building trustworthiness allows us to "reconstruct the constructions of the respondent and to view life through the eyes of the respondent" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 25). The following

table will outline the various techniques used in this study to ensure trustworthiness guidelines have been met.

Table 3

Trustworthiness Indicators

Trustworthiness Term	Trustworthiness Technique	Trustworthiness Activities
Credibility	Triangulation Member Check	Transcribed and coded Interviews Document analysis- Alternate Standards and Assessments, Dynamic Learning Maps and written protocol and researcher journal
Transferability	Thick Description Purposive Sampling Reflective Journal	Researcher Journal-field notes, emerging themes, and contacts for participants Check content and context of interviews and interpretation of data
Dependability	Member Check Reflective Journal	Member check with participants Researcher journal with body language, tone and gestures

Confidentiality is an essential component of the ethical considerations of this study. The participants know where the data is stored and for how long. The participants also know who have access to the data and finally how the data is reported. In addition to the data each participant's identity is protected by using fictitious names and self-reports have no identifying markings.

Summary

This study is qualitative in nature with a focus of narrative inquiry. Interviews, written protocols, and document analysis will be used to determine teacher and administrative perceptions of alternate assessments and standards and the balance that occurs between prescribed and functional curriculum. The researcher ensured trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and research protocols were followed to ensure the study is valid and reliable. The participants of the study are teachers and administrators with experience in working with students with severe and profound disabilities. The next chapter will share participant introductions and stories that emerged during the research process.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANT STORIES

Introduction

Throughout the data collection process the participants shared stories of challenge, success and perseverance while working with individuals with severe and profound disabilities. The participants' stories are an integral component of this study and are included to allow the reader a glimpse into the challenges facing today's special educators and to facilitate a deeper understanding of the students, teachers, administrators and families included in this study. The current chapter is a recounting of each participant's story, and the following chapter is the written account of the analysis of the emergent themes across all the data sources.

During each interview, the participants each shared at least one story about at least one student in the present or past that had made a lasting impression. Many of the participants spoke easily about their students' struggles and successes. The participants were also able to discuss the alternate testing system with ease and confidence. Each participant described the students, who are the topic of this study as having a variety of ability levels ranging from nonverbal to functioning on an early childhood level kindergarten or first-grade level. Participants were interviewed in public locations, usually local coffee shops. The semi-structured interviews took approximately thirty

minutes to forty-five minutes per participant. During the interviews, the researcher took notes regarding expressions, thoughts, reactions to comments and participant insights. A journal was kept throughout the coding and interview process to note observations of participants, themes and insights. The interviews were all digitally recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. The following chart provides a brief description of each participant including years of experience, type of student's needs, type of support in the classroom and the school setting.

Table 4 Study Participant Overview

Participant Pseudonym	**Years Experience/ Type**	**Student Needs**	**Support in the classroom**	**Setting**
Kelly Taylor	5-10 years/ school administrator	Variety- autism, nonverbal, intellectual disabilities	Special education teacher and paraprofessionals	Suburban/ elementary and middle school
Donna Martin	Over 20 years /school administrator	Variety- autism, syndromes, nonverbal, and intellectual disabilities	Special education teacher, and paraprofessionals	Urban/ elementary
Susan Keats	0-5 years/ school administrator	Variety, autism, intellectual disabilities	Special education teacher and paraprofessional	Rural/ secondary
Gina Kincaid	15-20 years/ Special education teacher	Variety- autism, nonverbal, wheel-chair, walker, physical needs, intellectual disabilities	Special education teacher, paraprofessionals, Occupational and physical therapist, speech language therapist	Suburban/ Elementary
Valerie Malone	0-5 years/special education teacher	Variety- Down's Syndrome, low verbal ability, nonverbal, autism, and intellectual dis.	Special education teacher, paraprofessionals, occupational, physical and speech therapist	Suburban/ elementary

Participant Pseudonym	Years Experience/ Type	Student Needs	Support in the classroom	Setting
Brenda Walsh	Over 20 years/ special education teacher	High need students, CP, Blindness, syndromes,	Special education teacher, paraprofessionals, occupational, physical, and speech therapist	Suburban/ elementary
Janet Sosna	10-15 years/special education teacher	Emotional disturbance, autism spectrum, CP, physical needs, intellectual needs, nonverbal and verbal skills	Special education teacher, and paraprofessionals	Rural/ elementary
Clare Arnold	Over 20 years/special education teacher	Wheel chairs, nonverbal, tube feed	Special education teacher, paraprofessionals, regular education students	Rural/ high school
Carly Reynolds	5-8 years/special education teacher	Multiple disabilities, intellectual and medical needs	Special education teacher and paraprofessionals	Suburban/elementary
Andrea Zuckerman	Over 20 years/ special education teacher	Autism, intellectual disabilities, nonverbal, wheel-chairs	Special education teacher, paraprofessionals, occupational, physical and speech therapist	Urban/ elementary

Reflections of Success

Kelly Taylor has been a school administrator for more than eight years, serving in two districts within the same region of the state; she has more than 20 years' teaching experience working kindergarten through sixth-grade students. Ms. Taylor specialized in curriculum and instruction, serving as a teacher coach prior to becoming a school

administrator. Her previous experience in the classroom and as teacher coach allowed her to deepen her content knowledge. Our interview took place at a local coffee shop after work. We both had a drink and a chocolate chip cookie. As we began talking about her experiences, she recalled stories of students and teachers who had made a lasting impression on her. During the interview, her tone ranged from animated when recalling success stories and irritation when narrating stories of struggle. As we began talking about her experiences, she leaned in, her eyebrows lifted and she smiled as she shared stories about students that were memorable.

Taylor shared an anecdote about Rose, who struggled to even attend school due to the severity of her disabilities. Rose is nonverbal, in a wheelchair and has a very low ability level due to the traumatic brain injury (TBI) she suffered at the age of four. Prior to Rose's TBI, she had been a normal developing child. Now, Rose smiles when she hears music and her favorite singer is Hanna Montana. Rose has many friends who greet her and talk to her at recess. Rose struggles every day due to her brain injury. She is unable to complete grade-level work, communicate with peers, teachers or family, and requires constant supervision and support with all basic needs in her life including toileting and feeding.

Rose has a very supportive family that has adapted their home, vehicles and life style to accommodate her needs. Even with the adaptations needed for Rose the family includes her in every aspect of family life, including vacation trips. The family took a trip to Disney World over spring break one year, and when she returned from the trip Rose would hum and make sounds along to music. The student visited Ms. Taylor's office

occasionally so they could sing together, and as she recounted the story of Rose, Ms. Taylor's face gleamed as she recalled this special student.

Ms. Taylor shared another story about Tommy who was diagnosed with severe autism. As Ms. Taylor remembered the facts around Tommy's life she became visibly upset, her eye-brows raised, her vocal, tone became firm and short and she sat up straighter. Tommy loves Star Wars, and as a six year old he was able to tell people anything they ever wanted to know. His ability to share Star Wars trivia, facts and information in such detail confused teachers because he could not complete any work in class without full support. Tommy fixated on Star Wars and when the teacher began using Star Wars based lessons with Tommy he was able to shine. The next year a new teacher had Tommy on her class load and the teacher refused to "feed" his "obsession" as the teacher called it. After two short months with this teacher, Tommy reverted back to completing any work only with the full support of an adult.

Donna Martin sat beside me as we discussed her experiences. She has been an administrator for over twenty-five years with more than thirty years' experience in education, all in an urban setting. This interview took place at a local restaurant, where we drank water and ate chips and salsa. As she began reminiscing about her experiences with special education teachers, especially those who work with students with severe and profound disabilities, Ms. Martin spoke with enthusiasm and passion. Her lived-experience of the history of special education and her ability to describe the many changes over the years regarding service delivery, identification and assessment practices deepens her ability to provide insider information that other participants were unable to describe. Her experiences include working with students from pre-kindergarten through

eighth grade. Ms. Martin has worked her entire career in the same district, in various schools.

Ms. Martin shared a story about Billy age 5, who was living with a relative after his parents abandoned him when they realized the severity of his special needs. Billy has severe autism, is verbal but needs constant supervision. Prior to moving in with his relatives Billy had violent outbursts, kicking, hitting, throwing objects and trying to injure himself and others. Since moving in with relatives Billy has been attending school daily and this provides a regular and predictable schedule for him. He has a visual schedule with pictures on a Velcro strip to help him know what he is doing next in his day. At the beginning of each day his teacher reviews the visual schedule with him and lets him know if there are any changes to his schedule before the day begins. His once aggressive and violent behavior is managed and controlled with the use of a visual schedule. The visual schedule eliminates the uncertainty in Billy's day.

Billy communicates with key school staff including his teacher, the principal and the counselor and he is able to participate in class discussions when he has the lesson pre-taught to him in the special education class prior to his going to the regular education class. Ms. Martin was proud of his progress and happy to see him being successful with his communication skills in the school setting. She reported the hours it took on her part with the special education teacher and the rest of the team to make the appropriate accommodations and get the right people in the right places to support Billy during the school day. Ms. Martin knew with the appropriate supports, systems and routines Billy would be able to maneuver his daily schedule and begin to meet the expectations of his teachers. Billy is able to communicate calmly several basic phrases, which in the past

would have triggered an outburst. He is able to say "I don't like that" as well as, "help me with …" which is another one of the key reasons his aggression and violence have decreased. Ms. Martin closed the story stating that working students who have severe disabilities is never complete: however, the smooth and productive days outnumber the challenging days for Billy right now in his education and that is very promising.

Gina Kincaid has been a teacher for more than eighteen years, including two years in high school before moving to the elementary level which includes kindergarten through fifth grade; all of her teaching experience has been with students having special education needs, primarily with severe and profound disabilities. She has worked at the same elementary school since leaving the high school. She serves as the special education team leader for the building. When Ms. Kincaid first started answering my questions, she was wringing her hands appearing nervous and wanted to make sure she was answering the questions she was being asked. After a few moments spent reassuring her that she was doing a good job, she relaxed and leaned forward to show her interest. Once she began telling me about her students, she smiled, her face lit up, and her tone was uplifting.

Ms. Kincaid shared a story about Daisy, a student she has taught since Daisey was in kindergarten and now Daisy is in fifth grade. Daisy has a rare syndrome that impairs her cognitive ability, so that although a fifth grader she functions at about a two- year-old level. Daisy's parents provided resources and opportunities for Daisy to grow. From the beginning, medical professionals warned Daisy's parents that their daughter would not be able to communicate; however, she is able to express basic needs and wants. Ms. Kincaid excitedly told me about Daisy's recent success at Special Olympics, where she

was able to stay in the dorms with the team instead of staying with her mom. Daisy has progressed significantly over the last six years with the continued support, routine and communication Ms. Kincaid has ensured are in place. Ms. Kincaid expressed her pride in the work with Daisy by closing our time with a simple thought, saying quietly, "Daisy is the reason I do what I do every day."

Andrea Zuckerman has been a special education teacher for twenty-five years in an urban district. Her career began at the high school level in a self-contained classroom; she then moved to the elementary level, where she has been for more than twenty years. When she spoke of her experience, her arms rested on the table, her tone was relaxed and she spoke confidently. She works with students with severe and profound disabilities who have some verbal abilities, as well as, some students who are nonverbal. Her students include those in wheel chairs, those with intellectual disabilities, autism, multiple handicapping conditions and other syndromes as well, as those with physical needs who require assistance with all tasks including, in the restroom.

Andrea Zuckerman retold a story about Fern, a young lady who was sent to school only for half days at first because her behavior was so violent and unpredictable. Within a couple of months at the new school, with Ms. Zuckerman and her team of paraprofessionals Fern was able to come to school full days and the violent outburst were eliminated because the student had a method to communicate her needs and desires. Fern is now able to walk around the school on errands, she greets students and teachers, and she always has a smile on her face. Ms. Zuckerman related that Fern has even showed an ornery side by hiding things from the teacher, including her car keys and activities that challenge Fern.

Carly Reynolds is in her second career and has been a special education teacher for six years in a suburban district. When she began talking about her path to teaching, her face brightened and she spoke with compassion and caring in her voice. As she spoke of her experience in the nursing field prior to becoming a special education teacher, she revealed the knowledge to be extremely beneficial in her current position. The students in her classroom have a range of disabilities including intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, medical, and physical needs.

Ms. Reynolds shared a story about making tough decisions as a teacher. Ms. Reynolds was in a very difficult place, when she realized something was wrong with Flower, one of her students. Flower has several things stacked against her, including being nonverbal and having cerebral palsy. Ms. Reynolds discovered that Flower had fallen off the couch at home, landing on a heating grate. Apparently no one noticed and Flower lay there long enough to cause a burn. Flower is now in a home where she is monitored and communicated with to ensure her needs are being met. Ms. Reynolds also shared that several of her students were living in foster care and she is seeing the students thrive. Ms. Reynolds' passion for finding any mode to communicate with her students was evident when she shared how she gets students to express themselves. She uses picture choices, recorded switches to give the students a voice, eye gaze which requires the teacher to be fully tuned into the student's emotions, reactions, dislikes and likes, as well as her relationship with the students and her intuition to increase communication with individuals in her class.

Valerie Malone has been a special education teacher for four years. She has taught in both urban and suburban environments, starting as a regular education teacher

then discovering very quickly that she enjoyed working with students with severe disabilities. As she talked about working with students with special needs she was eager to share all she could about her experience with a smile and modulated tone. She has taught special education for two years. Ms. Malone works with a variety of students including those with Down's Syndrome, nonverbal to some vocalizations, and some physical needs. Her students spend some of their time throughout the day with nondisabled peers.

Ms. Malone shared a touching story about Timmy, a fourth grader who was verbal but with a low ability level. Timmy knew he should have passed the state test to go to fourth grade but he did not. He could not get past the idea he had not passed the test, focusing constantly on his own perception of having failed and questioning his placement. He told Ms. Malone he was stupid and he should be in third grade. After several months of working to convince Timmy he was in the correct grade, he was not stupid and he was making progress he started to come around to believing his teacher. Ms. Malone wondered aloud during our conversation how many other students have felt that way and were not able to express themselves because as teachers we are not meeting their needs. Ms. Malone bemoaned the requirement for her to teach the state alternate standards instead of spending most of the day working toward mastering skills that would allow these students to be functional in their community once they are out of the public school setting. Ms. Malone's passion for her own students and others across the state was strong.

Janet Sosna has been a teacher for fifteen years in a rural district. She has worked with students primarily with severe and profound disabilities in a self-contained

classroom for most of her career. Prior to becoming a teacher, Ms. Sosna worked with adults with disabilities in residential facilities before becoming a paraprofessional for students with disabilities. She currently has students with autism spectrum disorders, physical needs, intellectual disabilities and emotional disorders. Her students possess a mix of verbal and nonverbal skills. As we talked at the coffee shop, her tone was bold and inviting and she eagerly shared stories of success and frustration.

Ms. Sosna told a story about , Jimmy, who started the school year in October, when he arrived in her classroom with a history of hitting, kicking, and pinching with no English at all. As the year went on Ms. Sosna watched and listened to Jimmy in order to develop strategies to help Jimmy express his frustrations through more acceptable avenues. Ms. Sosna told me about Jimmy being terrified of the hallway, so that he would get to the bathroom door or near the bathroom and he would stop, drop to the floor and scream. In the past Ms. Sosna might have turned this into a power struggle; however, she learned that Jimmy was communicating some fear. She was able to figure this out because they watched, listened and tracked his behavior in order to make the behavior about his communication not a power struggle. She has not been able to figure out why he is so afraid of bathroom, but she has been able to figure out it is men in hats and bathrooms that trigger a negative response in him.

Clare Arnold has been a teacher for twenty-eight years, all at the secondary level in a rural district. We met at a local coffee shop and had drinks and pastries. As she spoke about her experiences, her words and tone were intent and direct. Her students have a range of categories including those with severe and profound disabilities. She works with another teacher and three paraprofessionals in the classroom. She also

benefits from having regular education students come to the classroom to assist the students and model peer interactions, as well as support the students in learning opportunities. The goal for her students is learning functional skills so they will be able to work after high school graduation in some sort of sheltered or assisted work setting. As she talked about the goal, her tone was excited and it was evident that ensuring the students have a place to go after high school was a source of pride.

Ms. Arnold shared her story of getting her students into the community to help them be able to transition once they graduate from high school. In her classroom, students complete workshop like jobs to help them begin to master skills they will need after high school. Ms. Arnold recounted one story that involved Lily who after months of practicing crushing cans walked over to the area in the classroom and began loading the cans into the cups which were usually set up for her and then placing one can at a time into the crushing machine that was all manually operated. Ms. Arnold beamed with pride as she told the story. The pure joy and accomplishment was worth a million words on Lily's face as told by Ms. Arnold.

Susan Keats has been in education for more than ten years, beginning her career as a special education teacher and is currently an administrator in a rural secondary school. She met me at a local coffee shop and sat across from me as we talked. When she reflected on her experiences as a teacher and administrator, her eyebrows raised and her tone dropped as she talked about the students who have severe and profound disabilities. As an administrator, she has a unique ability to understand teacher, student and administrator perspectives. Ms. Keats has worked with pre-kindergarten through high school-aged students.

She recounted a story about Sam, who began the school year with none of the required courses or assessments being taken. After many hours of tutoring before and after school Sam finally passed the required assessments to allow him to be on track to graduate the following spring. While Ms. Keats shared this story her tone was initially monotone, however, after sharing the success of getting Sam back on track her tone become enthusiastic.

Brenda Walsh has been a teacher for more than twenty-three years in the same district and works with students with a variety of disabilities, including those with severe and profound disabilities. Early in her career she, worked with the students in a self-contained classroom; she now works with students and teachers collaboratively in both a regular education and special education classroom. She has worked with a range of students and ability levels over the years. She works to integrate her students with other students to help them learn from each other. Ms. Walsh was soft-spoken and rarely changed inflection during the interview even when making a drastic comparison between two activities, one where students gained skills and one where students made little to no progress.

Ms. Walsh started sharing a story about how the whole school supported the students in her class to ensure the students were able to pass the required assessments. As she told the story about collaboration and feelings of inclusion she smiled and talked quickly. The special education teacher worked with the regular education teachers to create activities to meet the OAAP requirements. An important part of the story was how the regular education students assisted the special education students while completing the tasks. The teachers found the high-school-aged students responded better to their

peers over the adults and this realization encouraged the teachers to use the regular education students as an asset to help the special needs students be successful. Since the beginning of this process, special education students have shown progress and the regular education students are learning a valuable lesson about helping individuals with differences.

Challenge Reflections

Ms. Taylor recalled a time with a new teacher who did not budget her time appropriately to complete the portfolios for students with severe and profound disabilities. As she began telling the story, her hand moved more, eyebrows raised, her tone intensified and her words were crisp. Ms. Taylor recalls realizing the teacher's situation having not started collecting the required information to complete the OAAP though and it was mid-April with testing fast approaching. Ms. Taylor reported that she "rallied the troops" including other special education teachers in the building, regular education teachers, other administrators, support staff and herself together completing the required components on time. Ms. Taylor emphasized she learned , to always check the progress of each student's OAAP data collection and preparation throughout the school year. She says she now never leaves anything to chance and she was happy to report, since the one incident, she has not been in that predicament again. Her smile by the end of the story was bigger, her shoulders were more relaxed and she sighed at the conclusion.

Ms. Keats told a story of a new teacher in her building taking over for a long-time teacher who had neglected her duties, effectively failing the students in the rural school system. As an example, Ms. Keats told of Sam, a junior in high school, who has only

taken life-skills courses during school. This student has never been enrolled in basic high school courses such as, English 1-3, Algebra, biology, or US history. Sam was thus not prepared to take any End of Instruction tests, which is a state requirement for graduation from high school with a standard diploma. The consequence of his former teacher's neglect means Sam could not graduate with a high school diploma; he would at most be eligible for a certificate of completion. The lack of a high school diploma has a multitude of consequences that would last this student a life-time. The new teacher has started working diligently to repair this damage to Sam's educational preparation. Ms. Keats reported the countless hours the new teacher has put in to save students like Sam. Sam took his first EOI test and passed, and now must pass only three more tests until he can be awarded a high school diploma .

Ms. Martin shared a concern about the how teachers must balance the functional curriculum and the required curriculum, even though using alternate standards is something of an accommodation. She spoke of the teachers feeling overwhelmed with meeting the needs of both functional and required curriculum. One teacher, for example spent hours before and after school creating activities and merging both curricula whenever possible. This teacher was able to figure out a way to use the simple task of making a sandwich to connect to several of the standards needed for the OAAP. Such ingenuity and resourcefulness made this teacher a star in Ms. Martin's eyes.

Summary

Sharing these participant stories allows the reader to gain a glimpse into the world of individuals with severe disabilities, their teachers and the staff members who support them. Most of all these stories act to give those without a voice a way to have their stories

shared with others. During the interviewing and transcribing process it became evident that not all students with severe and profound disabilities present in the same way and the teachers who teach these students have a wide range of experiences. In compiling these stories the researcher was reminded continually that we never know what we don't know until we have the opportunity to experience a new challenge.

CHAPTER V

EMERGENT THEMES

The previous chapter introduced the participants and shared their stories. Through those stories many themes emerged. In this chapter the emergent themes from the interviews and documents will be discussed. Noddings' Ethic of Care provided a lens for the analysis of the data. Noddings (2013) states, "When we care, we should, ideally be able to present reasons for our action/inaction which would persuade a reasonable disinterested observer that we have acted in behalf of the cared-for" (p. 23). While coding the interviews and researcher journal the "care" of the teachers emerged quickly through the transcribed interviews. Teacher and administrator reflection provided additional confirmation of the role "caring" plays in the severe and profound classroom. "After listening and reflecting, the carer must respond. If she can, she responds positively to the students expressed need" (Noddings, 2012, p. 772). Balancing the individual needs of the students while meeting the requirements put forth by the state and federal governments demands the teacher to use professional judgment. Noddings (2012) suggests "Good teachers must be allowed to use their professional judgment in responding to the needs of their students (p. 774). A document analysis of the alternate standards and assessments provided context and actual data.

Emergent Themes

After the interviews with each participant were transcribed, data were coded using data analysis searching for common themes, phrases and sentiments in each transcribed interview. Other data included coding and analysis were testing blueprints, alternate

standards in Oklahoma, and Dynamic Learning Maps. Additional coding consisted of using word repetition, indigenous categories, (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011), missing information, unmarked text and key words in context for emergent themes.

Frustration: Unreasonable Expectations

Participants applied different meanings to frustration that included: not fair to students, unfair expectations, OAAP not giving real information about student's knowledge/ability and taking time away from what the students really needed to focus time. Participants expressed concerns regarding having students spend many hours working on grade-level standards that were most often too difficult for the students to conceptually understand. Teachers felt students should spend hours devoted to learning how to communicate and function, along with basic reading and math skills. Almost all of the teachers in the study stated the idea of having students with severe and profound disabilities identify the branches of government was frustrating and even a waste of time. Noddings (2013) stated, "Another sort of conflict occurs when what the cared for wants is not what we think would be best for him, and still another sort arises when we become overburdened and our caring turns into 'cares and burdens" (p. 18). As the teachers negotiated the demands the feeling of frustration and burden were apparent in the transcribed interviews.

The document analysis of the testing blueprints and alternate standards demonstrated the grade level curriculum expectations for the students with severe and profound disabilities. An example from the testing blueprints, Essential Elements Assessed, for third grader in Oklahoma expected the student to answer who and what

questions demonstrating understanding of details in text and ordering two events form a text using directional words like first, then, next and so on.

Balance: Competing Expectations

Participants discussed the struggles they encountered between "balancing the required and functional curriculum" in the classroom daily. Several of the participants admitted to focusing mainly on the functional curriculum and only working on the required curriculum to get the required elements for the state assessment. These participants agreed that the students needed to learn to "get along" in society; that included communicating basic needs, working if possible, and knowing how to act in social settings. One participant alluded to working on the required curriculum throughout the year; however, when asked additional questions her answers revealed that the participant truly focused on the functional curriculum linking some of the required standards into activities aligned to functional living skills. In the end, "balancing the required curriculum and the functional curriculum" resulted in the largest, most time-consuming obstacle for teachers. Teachers felt obligated to teach and prepare students for the assessment, along with assisting the students in learning to function in society through having basic skills including being able to read, do math and communicate.

Both teacher and administrator participants commented on the "time-consuming" aspects of the portfolio assessment. Valerie Malone recalled, a "two-and-a-half month process to complete one five-paragraph essay." Teacher participants relayed the amount of time required to compile the required artifacts for the assessment. Prior to the 2014-2015 school year, teachers were required to develop the tasks that met the task descriptions for the assessment. Creating those tasks took upwards of thirty hours per

student, since each student required individualized tasks to demonstrate their knowledge. For example, if the task description required adding two digit by digit problems with regrouping, the teacher would have to create an activity to allow the student demonstrate their ability to add with regrouping. Remember, this task would not be created using a worksheet as might be the case for most students instead, teachers might use manipultives, colored objects or use an augmentative device to have the student answer yes or no for each step of the process. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, the reading and math tasks are computer based, creating yet another problem for teachers and students. Teachers are struggling with how to teach the students to use the computer independently to show their cognitive ability on each of the tasks. The "time-consuming" factor also puts stress on teachers and administrators because students are losing time that could be spent on functional tasks; instead, they are spending many hours on the required tasks to prepare for an assessment that may not give a complete picture of the students' abilities and growth over the school year.

Time Balance

When participants were asked about challenges they faced in the classroom and the OAAP process, all respondents answered some version of Gina Kincaid's statement "Most challenging is taking the time to complete the assessment, when they really need to learn how to function in society." Teachers struggled with balancing between the functional curriculum to meet the students functional needs and the alternate curriculum to prepare for the test. The teachers felt the OAAP took too much time to complete. They also felt there was a lack of continuity to meet the students' needs with the amount of time spent preparing and taking the tests. Kincaid also stated, "the alternate standards are

too high for my students, so it's a challenge." She went on to say, "the older the students get the harder it gets in math for instance."

Valerie Malone stated the importance of a "team effort" to complete the portfolios. She said, "it's definitely wasn't me by myself, it took the paras, [paraprofessionals] other kids who had a good relationship with that kid, general education teacher, it was a village, trust me, we even called the mom to help." The portfolios require countless hours, team effort, creativity and dedication to complete. Clare Arnold mentioned "collaborating and working together" to complete the portfolios. She does not see the connection between the portfolio and what the students really need to function in life.

The time balance is shifting with the use Dynamic Learning Maps testlets for each component of the assessment. The testlets are computer based for reading and math. During each testlet teachers can collect manipulatives for the item being evaluated, however, the teacher must collect the needed items once the student has started the testlet.

Assistive Technology

Brenda Walsh uses technology such as her SMART board, youtube and online books to engage students in the reading process. She focuses on "WH questions and preselected vocabulary" to "make connections for students." For student with very limited verbal skills Ms. Walsh uses devices that allow individuals to pre-record answers and then students select the answer choice for the question. Janet Sosna also mentioned the use of switches to help her students communicate choices.

Clare Arnold discussed the use of pictures to help students communicate. She also mentioned the use of pictures on a schedule to help students know the next activities

in the day. Although pictures are an example of a low-tech device, it is still considered assistive technology.

Andrea Zuckerman shared how she uses Big Mack switches to help students communicate basic two choice options, like yes or no, like or dislike, or fiction or nonfiction. During class time these are used for students who do not communicate verbally. The basic two choice switch supports students "voice" in the daily lessons.

Oppression and Othering

As I continued to code the data a theme kept reoccurring, oppression. For the teachers, they saw the assessments as sources of oppression and Othering. Taylor stated, "instead of spending time trying to work on those grade level skills- should be doing things to stimulate more physical and emotional functioning." The students that the teachers and school administrators referred to in this study are often Othered by society, families, schools and school personnel. Students with severe and profound disabilities represent about one to two percent of the population however, they require a lot of support, manpower, and physical and financial resources to be schools. For years, this population was in special schools away from the general population. As the years have progressed this population has been included in public schools. The inclusion of this population has led to at least three to five adults being placed in one classroom to support no more than ten students. The teachers must use alternate standards aligned to general education standards at the child's grade level to educate and assess the child.

Sosa recounted the struggle of negotiating, "when to push the student and not to push and when it is manipulation and when the student has reached their limit." The oppression occurs when the child needs the functional curriculum and instead is forced to

endure the alternate standards, which often are too involved for them to even begin to comprehend. Valerie Malone stated, "the kids are just beaten down." Kelly Taylor stated "we are faced with unrealistic expectations for students with the most severe needs with minimal support" demonstrates the oppression experienced by the students, teachers and families of students with severe and profound disabilities.

Summary

The coded data from the transcribed interview, document analysis and researcher journal provided multiple sources for themes to emerge. The richest data and themes were not always from the words spoken by the participants but by their gestures, tone and unspoken words. The theme of frustration experienced by teachers and students with the process of alternate assessments and the unfair expectations were some of the most prevalent. The oppression and isolation felt by the teachers and administrators because of the struggle to balance the planned curriculum and functional curriculum reoccurred in several areas including when participants discussed pushing students to produce a response for the assessment or when students not testing are not involved in rigorous instruction because of the need for several adults to work with the one student being assessed. The themes that emerged in this study revealed the negotiation and balance involved in working with individuals with severe and profound disabilities.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

This study looked at the alternate assessment used in Oklahoma and how teachers and school administrators balance, negotiate and interpret the planned and functional curriculum, meeting the basic needs for students with severe and profound disabilities. Special education teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured format of questions, as well as asked to complete a written protocol with additional questions that could be mailed or emailed to the researcher. Using a separate set of semi-structured questions, school administrators were also interviewed. There were two primary questions to be answered in this study.

1. How do special education teachers and administrators balance, negotiate, and interpret the alternate curriculum for special education students with severe and profound disabilities regarding the portfolio assessment to assess student progress in Oklahoma?
2. What meanings are teachers and administrators constructing with alternate standards and assessments regarding their negotiation of the curriculum and assessment challenges?

The importance of completing this study and reporting the findings to stakeholders is one step to informing those who can improve the education process for

the Othered population with whom the participants work. Policy makers, including elected officials, need to truly understand the real-world effects of implementing the mandate that all students must be assessed on grade- level standards, and realize that students who qualify for the alternate assessment require a different focus than their peers in the education setting. Policy makers should therefore allow teachers and administrators to do what is best for this special population of individuals to truly assess progress and growth.

Balance, Negotiation and Interpretation of Alternate Curriculum

One of the research questions in this study was, "How do special education teachers and administrators balance, negotiate, and interpret the alternate curriculum for special education students with severe and profound disabilities regarding the portfolio assessment to assess student progress in Oklahoma?" Teachers are required to teach the required grade level curriculum to students with severe and profound disabilities. The data is clear from the participants in this study that they are working to balance the functional curriculum and the planned curriculum. The participants shared ways they teach the planned curriculum through functional activities, such as teaching algebra by using a shopping advertisement and a predetermined amount of money for students to learn to solve for x. Although it looks different in each setting based on each teacher's perceptions and experiences, data analysis clearly indicated the teachers work to incorporate each student's strengths to learn the necessary skill.

The methods teachers and administrators use to balance, negotiate and interpret the alternate curriculum for students with severe and profound disabilities regarding alternate assessments are complex. For example, most of the teacher participants

emphasized the importance of preparing students for life after high school through implementing the functional curriculum, while the administrators gave more attention to preparing the students for alternate assessments especially in regard to school accountability.

An additional challenge revealed through the data analysis is the balance each special education teacher uses in regards to their administrator. The balance and negotiation comes into play when the administrator is ensuring the students with severe and profound disabilities will be proficient on the assessment so their scored do not negatively affect the overall school letter grade. The teacher must interpret the curriculum, testing blue prints and then determine the best way to get each to master the determined standard or skill on the assessment while still negotiating each student's basic needs and frustration level. The accountability pressure placed on the teacher, administrator, and student with severe and profound disabilities distracts the teacher from having enough time to focus on functional curriculum. One participant in the study said it quite well when she said, the functional skills take a back seat until the students master the needed skills for the assessment. Simply put the teachers teach the planned curriculum ahead of the functional needs of the students.

Special education teachers must also balance and negotiate the demands of each student even within the same grade level because with three fifth graders in the classroom, each student usually requires vastly different types of activities. For example, one student may be completely nonverbal and use an alternative mode of communication such as a Big Mack Switch that has been programmed by the teacher for basic answers, meaning the activity for this student is basic yes and no answers or choose one of the two

pictures to demonstrate understanding. In this example the teacher is providing the choices. While another student in the same room may have some verbal skills and is thus able to answer questions, resulting in the student initiating the answers instead of the teacher providing choices. This example demonstrates how a teacher in the classroom must create different lessons for each student to master the same skill or standard.

Meanings Teachers and Administrators Construct

The other driving research question in this study was, "What meanings are teachers and administrators constructing with alternate standards and assessments regarding their negotiation of the curriculum and assessment challenges?" During the course of the research participants revealed several ways they have constructed meaning of the alternate standards and assessments. The participants in the study determined the accountability measures are here to stay and have to make the best of the requirements. Some of the participants revealed they are able to get students to show understanding of a skill by manipulating the assessment, choices or response type, for example allowing students to match shapes, colors, or just react to a prompt with an eye gaze or sound instead of truly demonstrate mastery of the skill.

Several participants asked the question, Does this really show proficiency or just good manipulation on my (the teacher's) part? The special education who teaches students with severe and profound disabilities is in a difficult situation balancing the nuances of the demands from the law makers and meeting the unique needs of each of student. Teachers struggle with the balance because they want to please and respond in a positive manner, making sure the student receives the best score on the assessment and still meeting the needs of the student. I believe Noddings (2013) would argue, "We are

doubly mistaken when we approach moral matters in a mathematical way (p. 8). The moral matters of balancing between meeting the functional needs of the students and meeting the requirements of the law increases the internal debate for teachers.

As the participants were constructing their meaning of the curriculum and assessment for students with severe and profound disabilities the internal struggle of using time in a productive manner, balancing the mandates of testing and meeting the functional needs of the students were brought to the forefront. Several participant reflections are included here to illustrate this challenge, we practice the planned curriculum more than the functional curriculum, the alternate assessment takes so much extra time to complete, and we are asking students to do more than they are able, resulting in students shutting down or having an outburst.

Teachers feel pulled between following the state and federal requirements while also meeting the needs of the students they serve. One participant stated the alternate process is really not helping us determine what the child knows and it's not helping the child except to experience frustration. The alternate standards and assessments often do not fully inform the teacher or parent regarding the progress the student is making because the standards and assessments are unachievable to the students being assessed. Most of the students who are served in the category of severe and profound disabilities have a mental age of an infant to a young toddler, and expecting even a three year old to identify the branches of government, or the life cycle of a plant is unrealistic and both are examples of standards that are assessed in elementary school.

Implication for Practice

Based on the findings from this study several things should change to better serve the students with severe and profound disabilities in regards to alternate standards and assessments. One implication for practice is providing more training for teachers aligned to the assessment and standards with a continuum of specific strategies for each standard allowing teachers to better balance the planned curriculum with the functional level of each student. This practice would provide support for special education teachers that spend hours creating activities to support the standards. The continuum of strategies complements the current Dynamic Learning Maps that have been implemented to assess students with severe and profound disabilities.

Noddings (2012) suggests, **"**We need a system of evaluation that considers both assumed needs and expressed needs" (p. 778). This new system could take on several forms, one being moving to a growth model. This step would change the expectation from competing among others to tracking progress for each student, essentially competing with themselves. Using a growth model to assess students who qualify for alternate assessments would be an intuitive way to assess student achievement based on both academic and social emotional growth. According to Castellano and Ho (2013), "A growth model is a collection of definitions, calculations, or rules that summarizes student performance over two or more time points and supports interpretations about students, their classrooms, their educators, or their schools" (p. 16). There are many variables that go into developing a growth model as well as many statistical avenues to consider. Growth models can demonstrate data and results in a variety of ways. Growth descriptions, growth predications and value-added are three fundamental interpretations

for growth metrics to support (Castellano & Ho, p. 18). Finding a balance between focusing on the student's individual needs and satisfying the state standards should provide further alternatives for students with severe and profound disabilities.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study sought to understand how teachers and administrators balance, negotiate and interpret the alternate standards and assessments in Oklahoma and construct meaning while working with the requirements of testing all students. After completing this study, additional studies should be completed to answer questions that arose through the data collection and analysis process. Determining the best avenues to assessing students with severe and profound disabilities as well as what they should be assessed over are reoccurring questions and themes that arose.

While this study only focused on special education teachers in the state of Oklahoma, a similar study focusing on neighboring states would provide deeper understanding and possible alternatives to the process used in Oklahoma. A paradigm shift needs to occur around the purpose of testing. Currently, statistics determine an individual's value based a single test given one day. Noddings (2012) posits, "It is counterproductive to continue with modes of evaluation that rank all students from top to bottom on tasks forced on them, on which they have no choice and no opportunity to exercise their individual capabilities" (p. 779). Seeking how other states are applying meaning to the requirements of assessing students with severe and profound disabilities and balancing the student's basic needs and abilities while negotiating the requirements of testing all students could provide insights.

Additionally seeking parental input about the alternate standards and assessments process in Oklahoma and surrounding states would elicit voices not obtained in this study. Parental perspective in this process is a vital component that was not addressed in the current study.

A longitudinal study following individuals with severe and profound disabilities after they complete high school and the effects of the alternate standards and assessments in post-secondary life would add a useful dimension to the literature.

Balancing Functional and Academic Curriculum

Research focusing on balancing life skill/functional skills training and academic/alternate standards versus solely highlighting alternate/academic standards as the only topic taught and assessed for this population is key. While this group of individuals have benefited from the evolution of the thinking of educators, legislators and advocates to provide more opportunities something still needs to be improved. Focusing on what the students have learned during the year including life/functional skills and academic/alternative standards should be included in the formula of assessing and ranking the productivity of this group would be powerful and insightful. The importance of planning based on the individual instead of the generic grade level standards could provide needed insight into this ongoing debate of focusing on the students physical and emotional needs instead of academic needs.

Implications for Theory

Teachers who work with severe and profoundly disabled students demonstrate characteristics associated with the Ethic of Care theory. Noddings (2013) mentioned, "Teachers, also, need confirmation in order to nurture their own ethical ideals" (p. 196).

The possibilities for additional theory development associated with Noddings work in the area of balancing, negotiating and interpreting teachers' roles appears endless. As participants revealed during interviews the internal struggle between meeting expectations of the state and meeting the physical and emotional needs of the students in their classrooms occurs daily. Their ability to focus on the needs of the student even with impending implications for going against the requirements, for instance facing disciplinary actions, demonstrates their ability to put care above requirement. The negotiation to balance the alternate standards and the functional needs of the students creates stress for the teacher. The ability of the teachers to continue on because of their devotion to the students in their care is testament to their passion and conviction as teaching professionals.

While the struggle of the teachers and administrators has been discussed and dissected in this study, I can't help but wonder if there are other possibilities still to emerge. "I am suggesting that we do not see only the direct possibilities for becoming better than we are when we struggle toward the reality of other" (Noddings, 2013, p. 14). Being open to the possibilities and seeking to find those opportunities continues to speak to Noddings' Ethic of Care and the desire of teachers to construct their meanings around the work to support students with severe and profound disabilities.

Summary

This study provided insights into special education teachers and administrators constructed meaning, balance, negotiation and interpretation of alternate standards and assessments in the state of Oklahoma. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and data was coded seeking emergent themes. The emergent themes included the frustration

of unreasonable expectations, the need to balance competing expectations, issues of time, assistive technology and oppression and Othering.

The participant stories that arose during the interviews illustrated the care, balance, negation and time special education teachers and administrators devote to students with severe and profound disabilities. Additionally, the data indicated that the construction of meaning for the student learning is different from that of other students and requires significantly more time.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions for Special Education Teachers

1. Describe your experiences with teaching or working with students who have severe and profound disabilities.
    a. Follow-up: What type of students do you teach? How involved are the students?
2. Tell me about struggles you have encountered while working with students with severe and profound disabilities.
3. Tell me about successes you have encountered while working with students with severe and profound disabilities.
4. How do the alternate standards work…. Curriculum Access Guide- Alternate in your classroom?
    a. Follow up: What do you think about that?
5. Describe the OAAP process in your classroom.
6. Explain how you interpret the OAAP process in your classroom
    a. Follow up: Explain how you balance the OAAP process in your classroom.
7. Explain how you negotiate the OAAP process in your classroom.
8. Is there anything else you want me to know?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Administrators

1. Describe your experiences when working with special education teacher who teach students who have severe and profound disabilities.
2. Tell me about successes you have encountered related to alternate standards and assessments for students with severe and profound disabilities.
3. Tell me about struggles you have encountered related to alternate standards and assessments for students with severe and profound disabilities.
4. Describe the OAAP process in your school.
5. Tell me how you support your special education teachers.
6. Is there anything else you want me to know?

Appendix C: Written Protocol

Please answer these two questions and return with the self-addressed stamped envelope to the researcher.

1. Tell me how you negotiated the OAAP process, creating activities, data, videos, etc.

2. Tell me about a particularly memorable student's experience with alternative assessments. This could be a student who was well-served by the process or one who was not well-served by the process.

Appendix D IRB Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Thursday, June 27, 2013
IRB Application No	ED13116
Proposal Title:	Negotiating a Curriculum Balance: Perceptions of Special Education Teachers and Administrators regarding Alternative Assessments in Oklahoma
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 6/26/2014

Principal Investigator(s):

Joy Modenbach
14734 S. Glen Street
Glenpool, OK 74033

Pamela Brown
237 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Appendix E IRB Continuation

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date	Thursday, June 05, 2014	**Protocol Expires:**	**6/4/2015**
IRB Application No:	ED13116		
Proposal Title:	Negotiating a Curriculum Balance: Perceptions of Special Education Teachers and Administrators regarding Alternative Assessments in Oklahoma		
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt **Continuation**		
Status Recommended by Reviewer(s)	**Approved**		

Principal Investigator(s)

Joy Modenbach
14734 S. Glen Street
Glenpool, OK 74033

Pamela Brown
237 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Approvals are valid until the expiration date, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

New subject enrollment still in progress. Modification to include snowball sampling. No increased risks, reportable events, withdrawals, complaints or new/additional funding.

Signature: Shelia K

Shelia Kennison, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Thursday, June 05, 2014
Date

Appendix F IRB Continuation

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date	Thursday, May 21, 2015	Protocol Expires:	5/20/2016
IRB Application No:	ED13116		
Proposal Title:	Negotiating a Curriculum Balance: Perceptions of Special Education Teachers and Administrators regarding Alternative Assessments in Oklahoma		
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt **Continuation**		

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**

Principal Investigator(s)

Joy Modenbach
14734 S. Glen Street
Glenpool, OK 74033

Pamela Brown
237 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Approvals are valid until the expiration date, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

Subject involvement complete approval for analysis of identifiable data only. No changes, reportable events, withdrawals, complaints or new/additional funding.

Signature

Hugh Crethar, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Thursday, May 21, 2015
Date

VITA

Joy Lynn Modenbach

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in School Administration at University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 2000.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Special Education/Learning Disabilities at University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 1995.

Experience:

Principal at Cooper Elementary, 2012- Assistant Principal at Hoover Elementary, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 2011-2012.

Special Education Teacher, Lake Park Elementary, Putnam City Public Schools, 2009-2011

Education Coordinator, Whitefields, Piedmont, Oklahoma, 2008-2009

Upper School Principal, Town & Country, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 2004-2008

Evening Principal 2001-2004 and Special Education Teacher 1995-2004, Jenks Public Schools, Jenks, Oklahoma 1995-2004

Professional Memberships:
Learning Disability Association of Oklahoma, Secretary 1995-
Tulsa Association of Elementary School Principals, 2011-
Cooperative Council of School Administrators, 2011-
National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2011-