

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH  
DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

By

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*If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants. Isaac Newton*

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between experience as a school psychologist, time spent in supervising other school psychologists, training hours, interest in learning more about the IDEA, perceived self-knowledge of IDEA requirements, and time spent in evaluating students for IDEA eligibility with school psychologist's level of knowledge about IDEA eligibility requirements. A survey reflecting standards and competencies for professional practice was developed and administered to a sample of school psychologists licensed to practice in the state of Texas. A multiple regression analysis was performed on the data set. Among the predictors studied, only experience and time spent evaluating eligibility had a significant impact on the level of legal knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements. Implications for training and practice including new perspectives in design and development of graduate training and professional development as well as advancement of tools to assess the adequacy of current programs and development of continuing educational programming curriculum for school psychologists were discussed.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

How prepared and competent are school psychologists in implementing the mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)? This question is an elusive one, difficult to answer with any degree of certainty. This exploratory study investigates this basic question. It aspires to add to the research literature for the benefit of training programs, practitioners, and those who depend on these professionals for their knowledge and expertise in this area, children with disabilities and their parents. This introduction provides a brief background on the problem and how this research addressed it.

### **Background**

State and Local Education Agencies (LEAs and SEAs) are mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with defined educational disabilities within their jurisdiction. Often, school psychologists are responsible for the oversight of compliance within these duties. Their responsibilities require a working knowledge of special education law.

Although licensing and training standards require a minimum foundation of knowledge, much of the responsibility for maintaining these standards is left to the practicing school psychologist. It is in the interest of both LEAs and SEAs, the students they serve, and these practitioners to acquire and maintain an adequate degree of literacy about the IDEA. This study examined the level of knowledge school psychologists have about the IDEA, particularly its eligibility requirements and the relationship between that knowledge and various educational and work experience had by working school psychologists.

## **Statement of the Problem**

A search of the literature revealed few studies that directly addressed the specific legal duties and responsibilities of the school psychologist within the LEAs. Zaheer and Zirkel (2014) identified a paucity of reviews in professional journals in this area. Schimmel and Militello (2007) surveyed the level of teachers' legal literacy finding the majority surveyed "legally illiterate about school law" (p. 1). This study fills gaps in the research, focusing specifically on school psychologists and the area of legal knowledge most relevant to their work functions, knowledge of the IDEA eligibility requirements.

## **Purpose of the Study**

This study investigated the level of knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements of school psychologists in training and those already in the field to identify the adequacy of current knowledge and training needs. This study will benefit trainers, administrators, and legal professionals. Moreover, the current study was intended to enhance awareness of practitioners, professional boards of certification, and graduate program personnel in this important area of educational practice.

## **Research Questions**

To facilitate the process of increasing capacity for effective and appropriate services, the following questions were explored:

(1) What is the impact the cumulative amount of time in which the employee had served as a psychologist on knowledge of IDEA law, specifically its special education eligibility requirements?

(2) What is the impact of the percent of on-the-job time the psychologist spends supervising other psychologists (supervisory duties) on their knowledge level in IDEA law, specifically in the area of special education eligibility?

(3) What is the impact of IDEA legal training the psychologist had received and the extent of prior participation in legally related education courses (training hours), on their level of knowledge in IDEA, specifically in the area of special education eligibility?

(4) What is the relationship between school psychologists' knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements and their interest in learning more about IDEA law?

(5) To what extent do school psychologists' perceptions of their knowledge correspond to their actual knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements?

(6) What is the relationship between amount of on the job time spent performing special education evaluations and knowledge of IDEA's eligibility requirements?

Answers to these questions may assist in formulating policies about school psychologists' legal training both before and after they enter their professional psychology practices.

### **Methods and Procedures**

Based on a review of the relevant literature, several questions were raised regarding the level of school psychologists' legal knowledge in special education law at the practitioner level. A survey was developed and data derived from a sample of school psychologists licensed in the state of Texas. Insights regarding educational practice, policy, and training were developed through a multiple regression analysis of the data using SPSS. The details about this analysis are covered in Chapter 3.

## **Significance of the Study**

In an era of increased expectations and accountability, policies must be reviewed and developed to improve student outcomes with existing resources. This research adds to a limited knowledge base of legal literacy requirements and training for school psychologists. Recommendations for further research, policy, and practice, along with theoretical implications were derived from this study. Policy-makers and administrators can be empowered with additional knowledge to design improved systems for serving schools and students. The research enables practitioners and policy-makers to make informed calculations regarding time and resources invested against the benefits of professional development and in-service training.

## **Summary**

This research explored the legal literacy levels of first year, second year, and more experienced practicing school psychologists. There has been little research in this area; but what has been completed suggests a need for more research and training. This study adds to the knowledge base, providing insights to graduate-level training providers, in-service training program designers, as well as practitioners' own professional development needs. The primary method used to collect data were questionnaires and IDEA knowledge assessments of school psychologists. These data were analyzed to add objectivity and an acceptable degree of validity to the findings. Before exploring this design in more detail, the following chapter provides a review of current and relevant literature.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

This chapter provides context and background for the study. The literature review first examines the historical perspective regarding the origins of special education law, due process under the Fourteenth Amendment, legislative cornerstones supporting the rights of persons with disabilities, and specific court challenges that helped shape current law. How this historical foundation directly affects the daily practice of school psychology is then addressed, including identification and evaluation for IDEA eligibility, the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and placement decisions.

Parental rights are also an integral component to explore, as well as the requirements school districts must follow regarding privacy and confidentiality of records. Specific models for school psychological practice are reviewed. The standards and training that enable practitioners to perform these functions competently through graduate training and other preparation are also detailed. Requirements for school psychologists in practice including continuing professional development and ethical principles will be the focus for this study in the following chapter.

### **Brief History of IDEA**

The Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." By reason of this Amendment and long accepted practice, it has been assumed that education is a function of state government. That said, Article 1 Section 8 of the Constitution identifies specific powers granted to the federal government. Clause I, generally referred to as the "spending clause," grants the federal government power to tax and spend, enabling Congress to place conditions on the states for receipt of federal funds. The courts have

traditionally upheld this approach as a means to guide policy (*South Dakota v. Dole*, 1987; *United States v. Butler*, 1936), including encouragement of the states to provide for education of their citizens.

Most states had adopted compulsory school attendance laws by 1918; yet, students with disabilities were isolated, segregated, or not included at all (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). Use of “terms such as ‘imbeciles,’ ‘idiots, and ‘feeble minded’” reflected a “powerful desire to support and educate human beings in a presupposed dependent or even miserable position” (van Drenth, 2005, p. 107). Routine inclusion of individuals who were at one time marginalized required a long transformation, built on a gradual foundation of both legislative and judicial precedent.

*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) formed the basis for ending racial segregation in the public schools by contending that one class of people with unalterable characteristics, such as race, were denied equal opportunity to educational benefit because separate, and segregated education was not equal (Yell et al., 1998). Since the states were providing education as a benefit to all of its citizenry, they could not deny access to some without “the constitutional guarantee of equal protection under the law found in the Fourteenth Amendment” (Yell et al., 1998, p. 220). This section states “No State shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1). Challenges to exclusion of students with disabilities were led by parents and advocates under this provision.

In response to nationwide challenges, the role of federal government expanded in public education. A perceived loss of scientific and technological superiority after the successful launch of the Russian satellite Sputnik in 1957 spurred the U.S. Congress to pass the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 to provide additional funding to improve the nation’s



educational institutions (Harris & Miller, 2005). Federal involvement continued with passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), providing “Title I” funds “to assist educationally disadvantaged students in areas with high concentrations of poverty” (McDonnell, 2005, p.22).

*Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) and *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972) formed the underpinnings for each child with a disability to be provided the right to a free and appropriate public education (Yell et al., 1998), and “established clear preference for providing those services in the least restrictive placement” (Martin et al., 1996, p. 28). *Mills* expanded those rights to all children with disabilities as a class, including the right to due process and procedural protections under the Fourteenth Amendment (Martin et al., 1996; Yell et al., 1998). These cases formed the framework for an expanded role of federal involvement in public education, but not before advocates and parents were forced to seek congressional action placing legislative authority behind these constitutional rights (Martin et al., 1996).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, also known as Public Law 93-112, enacted in 1973, prohibited “discrimination against a person with a disability by any agency receiving federal funds” (Yell et al., 1998, p. 224). This legislation defined these “handicapped” individuals as:

Any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the persons’ major life activities, or a person who has a record of such an impairment, or a person who is regarded as having such an impairment. (Yell et al., 1998)

No funding was provided under Section 504, and enforcement was weak; nonetheless, these laws did establish a basic foundation for what has become commonly referred to as “special education” (Martin et al., 1996).

Subsequent reauthorizations of the ESEA prompted significant changes as the law evolved into its present form. Revisions included Public Law 93-380 of 1974, an amendment that introduced “due process procedures” and the concept “least restrictive environment.” P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA), mandated “nondiscriminatory testing evaluation and placement procedures” as well as provision of a “Free and Appropriate Education” (FAPE) to students with documented disabilities that met federal eligibility requirements (Yell et al., 1998, p. 225). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 amended P.L. 94-142 by changing the term “handicapped” to “individuals with disabilities,” and added transition planning for students 16 years of age and older and adding Autism and Traumatic Brain Injury as classes of disabilities (Yell et al., 1998). That same year, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) “expanded the rights of people with disabilities by outlawing discriminatory practices” providing “more remedies to parents than does the IDEA” (Martin et al., 1996, p.29).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, P.L. 105-17 introduced “measurable annual goals,” progress monitoring, and non-adversarial methods for resolving differences. It also addressed discipline and removal of students to alternative education settings, and required the use of positive behavior supports and functional behavior assessments (Yell et al., 1998). In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), introduced more amendments (Walsh et al., 2010) that included Response to Intervention (RtI), a general education process that requires applied interventions as part of the

evaluation and identification process. Procedural safeguards, the heart of due process, were to be provided to the parent upon initial referral, when a complaint was filed, when a decision to remove a student for disciplinary reasons was made, or upon parent request. Parental consent was required before evaluation could begin and prior to student placement in special education. IDEA 2004 added the requirement to convene preliminary hearings within 30 days of a due process complaint in order to provide less costly resolutions. Revisions in 2008 added the right of parents to revoke consent for placement at any time, for any reason. The most recent amendment, the Every Student Succeeds Act, was passed by congress in December, 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). These periodic reauthorizations addressed novel challenges requiring professionals to adapt to the new requirements.

### **School Psychology and the Law**

This section provides a brief overview of how this legislation, reauthorization enactments, and case law affect the practice of school psychology at the national, state, and local levels. As described in preceding sections, the origins of law derive first from the constitution, whether federal or state, followed by state and federal legislation. Administrative agencies then establish rules to implement that legislation. Finally, case law provides judicial interpretation regarding challenges made in state and federal courts to executive actions.

Under IDEA, school districts are required to first locate and identify the students they are required to serve. This responsibility is referred to as the “Child Find Duty.” Federal law requires that

the State must have in effect policies and procedures to ensure that all children with disabilities residing in the State, including children with disabilities who are homeless children or are wards of the State, and children with disabilities attending private schools,

regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. (20 U.S.C. § 1401; 34 C.F.R. §300.111(i))

The initial evaluation establishes or rules out eligibility for special education services through the Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) report. The FIE must include a report of the student's Response to Intervention (RtI), "now mandated by federal law to provide more effective services to students in general education" (19 T.A.C. §89.1040(c)(9)(B)(ii); Walsh et al., 2010).

### **Qualifying for Special Education Services**

Students age three to 21 must meet two qualifying criteria in order to be eligible to receive special education and/or related services: 1) The student must be identified as having at least one of the 13 possible disability classifications and 2) as a result of the disability, the student must be in need of special education or related services (20 U.S.C. § 1401, 3, A, ii, 2006). The 13 disabilities are as follows (34 C.F.R. § 300.7, c, 1-c, 13):

1. Specific learning disabilities (SLD)
2. Speech or language impairments
3. Intellectual disability
4. Emotional disturbance
5. Hearing impairment
6. Orthopedic impairment
7. Other health impairment
8. Visual impairment
9. Multiple disabilities

10. Deaf-blindness
11. Autism
12. Traumatic brain injury
13. Developmental delay

To determine if a child has a qualifying disability, a request for an initial evaluation may be made by a parent of the child, a state educational agency, other state agency, or the local educational agency (IDEA, 2004). Upon receiving parental consent, unless otherwise agreed upon between the parent and the local educational agency, the evaluation must occur within 60 days in order to facilitate timely identification of students in need of services (IDEA, 2004). The comprehensive evaluation must use a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental and academic information on the child to determine the educational needs of the student. The parent has a right to a copy of the evaluation report. The eligibility decision is made by a “team of qualified professionals,” which include the parent, a special education teacher, a regular education teacher, a person that can interpret the results of the evaluation, and a person in a supervisory capacity that is knowledgeable about available resources. To address the need for special education or related services, the “team of qualified professionals” must determine if the disability adversely affects educational performance based on present levels of academic performance. Parents dissatisfied with the results of evaluations, “have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE) of the child . . . by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the local educational agency (LEA), which is responsible for the education of the child” at no cost to the parent (34 C.F.R. Part 300.502 (a)(1), 300.502 (a)(3)(i)). Once students are identified as having a recognized educational disability, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are developed to address the individual needs of the

student. Related services and non-instructional services necessary to obtain benefit from the education program may also be provided (Walsh et al., 2010). Related services:

means transportation, and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services (including speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, social work services, school nurse services designed to enable a child with a disability to receive a free appropriate public education as described in the individualized education program of the child, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services, except that such medical services shall be for diagnostic and evaluation purposes only) as may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes the early identification and assessment of disabling conditions in children. (20 U.S.C. 1400 Part A §602(26)(A); 34 C.F.R. Part 300.34(4))

Once the students' individual needs and program are identified, a "placement" decision is made to determine the instructional setting. Decisions regarding eligibility, services, and placement are made by the individualized education program (IEP) team, which includes the parent, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, "someone who can interpret the instructional implications of the assessment data" and an administrator (20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(B)(v); 34 C.F.R. §300.321(a)(5); 19 T.A.C. §89.1050(c)(1)(E); Walsh et al., 2010). These processes and procedures establish the basic framework for LEAs to meet their obligations.

## **LEA Requirements**

Once the student is determined to be eligible, he or she is entitled to what IDEA calls *Free and Appropriate Publication* (FAPE) (Norlin, 2009, p. 14). In collaboration with parents, the LEA develops specially designed instruction to address the individual needs of the student (Burlington School Committee v. Massachusetts Department of Education, 1985, p. 471 U. S. 369). The responsibility for developing the IEP generally falls to LEA within which the student resides (Norlin, 2009). The process and the required documentation result in an IEP document (Norlin, 2009, p. 110). The school psychologist often has a major role in facilitating, managing, and maintaining the documentation of this process. School psychologists are frequently the IEP team member that corresponds directly with the parent.

LEAs also have responsibility to ensure parents are informed of their rights under IDEA., the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), state statutes such as the Texas Education Code (T.E.C.), and the Texas Administrative Code, known as the “Commissioner’s Rules” (22 Tex. Admin. Code § 465.2). These protections are modeled after the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which declares no person “shall be . . . be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation” (sec. 3), and extended to the states by the Fourteenth Amendment, which affirms:

No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. (sec. 1)

These rights are summarized for parents in the procedural safeguards. This publication, required by IDEA 2004, is provided by the Texas Education Agency (2014), which states “A

copy of the procedural safeguards available to the parents of a child with a disability must be given to the parents only one time a school year, except that a copy also must be given to the parents” upon request, “upon initial referral or parent request for evaluation . . . upon receipt of the first State complaint . . . and upon receipt of the first due process complaint,” and “in accordance with the discipline procedures in § 300.530(h)” (20 U.S.C. §§ 1414, 1415; 34 C.F.R. Part 300.504, and 19 T.A.C. Chapter 89). These safeguards ensure that the LEA provides prior written notice to the parent before it:

proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification of the child; proposes or refuses to initiate or change the evaluation of the child; proposes or refuses to initiate or change the educational placement of the child; proposes or refuses to initiate or change the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the child; ceases the provision of special education and related services due to the parent's revocation of consent for services; or implements an individualized education program (IEP) with which the parent or adult student disagrees. (34 C.F.R. Part 300.300(b)(4)(i), 300.503(a), 20 U.S.C. §§ 1415(a), 1415(b)(3))

## **FERPA**

The 1974 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) addresses obligations to protect privacy. This law serves as the guide for storage, classification, access, and rights to review educational records. This legislation also defines what constitutes an educational record, including clinical notes and test protocols. It is vital that school psychologists are familiar with these provisions within their education practice regarding storage, access, and destruction (Prasse, 2008).



## **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

One of the most important protections LEAs must comply with is the concept of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), or inclusion of students in the general education curriculum with their peers. This is one of the basic foundational concepts of special education law. The very notion set forth in *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* was that separate was not equal (Prasse, 2008). Formed on this basis, IDEA 2004 and its predecessor require “that to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children . . . are educated with other children who are not disabled” and that:

Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment occurs only if the nature and or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (34 C.F.R. §§ 300.114(2)(i)(ii))

Criteria used by courts to determine if school districts comply with LRE requirements were established in *Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education*, 1989; *Board of Education v. Holland*, 1992; and *Oberti v. Board of Education*, 1993 (Prasse, 2008). Yell (1995) outlined a set of considerations to address these criteria when determining placement in the least restrictive environment. These included considering the supplementary aids and services that were used, what interventions were attempted, consideration of the benefits of regular education placement, any adverse effects on the education of other students, opportunities for interaction with nondisabled peers, and the availability of a continuum of alternative settings from which to choose. A general understanding of judicial precedent described above is a rudimentary foundational concept for practical application. A basic framework of this judicial structure and process follows.

## **Judicial Structure**

Zaheer and Zirkel (2014) provided a review of basic judicial structure, sufficiently brief to provide context for this study, yet not detract from the primary purpose of the research. The author's framed prime sources of law were constituted from four successive levels within both the state and federal systems. The judicial system within the United States, generally structured around three levels within both the federal and state systems, include the trial courts, intermediate appellate courts, and the Supreme Courts. If "a state court of last resort has decided an important federal question in a way that conflicts with the decision of another state court of last resort or of a United States court of appeals" or a state court or United States court of appeals "has decided an important question of federal law that has not been, but should be, settled by (the Supreme Court), or has decided an important federal question in a way that conflicts with relevant decisions of" the Supreme Court, then a "writ of Certiorari" is submitted (Rules of the Supreme Court of the United States, 2017, Rule 10.(b)(c)). It is left to the discretion of the supreme justices which cases will be heard. A rule established in a previous case can be used as justification for subsequent decisions. This is called precedent and is typically limited to the issue at hand. Ancillary comments by judges related to other issues that are not specific to the case at hand are termed "Dicta" and can be used in a persuasive opinion, yet are non-binding for the lower courts. A basic understanding of this framework is important for gaining basic understanding of how the courts affect psychological practice.

LRE, FERPA, FAPE, and Procedural Safeguards are therefore LEA responsibilities derived from not only constitutional guarantees, but as an historical result of trial court decisions (Office of Special Education Programs, 2000). School educators and administrators must not only be aware of the various decisions and provisions, but also have a practical knowledge to remain compliant with the law. School psychologists are often required to possess this practical

knowledge and assume responsibility for having a working background and managing these particular aspects of special education law within the LEA (Prasse, 2008). A review of the process for attaining these foundational skills follows in the next section.

### **Foundations of School Psychological Services**

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is “a professional association that represents more than 25,000 school psychologists, graduate students, and related professionals” (“About NASP”, 2017). According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2010), “the mission of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is to represent school psychology and support school psychologists to enhance the learning and mental health of all children and youth” (p. 1). According to the *NASP Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* (2010a), “School Psychologists provide comprehensive and integrated services across 10 general domains” (p. 3). For the sake of brevity and relevancy to the study, this review focuses on Domain 10, the requirement for “Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice” (p. 8). Domain 10 addresses service delivery that is consistent with legal standards and regulations. These principles for professional practice include “responsible record keeping” and protecting the confidentiality of clients consistent with state and federal laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (p. 11). The FERPA law goes on to state that “school psychologists” also “assist administrators, teachers, other school personnel, and parents in understanding and adhering to legislation and regulations relevant to regular education and special education” and “participate in continuing education activities” (p. 9). These general guidelines set expectations for school psychologists across the country; however, each state is responsible for its own licensure and certification requirements.

In Texas, the “Psychologists’ Licensing Act” regulates the licensing to practice as a licensed school psychologist in the state of Texas (Tex. Occ. Code § 501.260). Sec. 501.260 requires:

- (1) satisfaction of minimum recognized graduate degree requirements;
- (2) completion of graduate course work at a regionally accredited institution of higher education in:
  - (A) psychological foundations;
  - (B) educational foundations;
  - (C) interventions;
  - (D) assessments; and
  - (E) professional issues and ethics;
- (3) completion of at least 1,200 hours of supervised experience;
- (4) receipt of a passing score on a nationally recognized qualifying examination determined to be appropriate by the board and on any other examination required by the board; and
- (5) satisfaction of the requirements, other than the degree requirements, for an applicant to take an examination for a provisional license.

What follows is a description of the process for meeting the foundational requirements for professional practice, including graduate training program design, and the process for credentialing licensed school psychologist in the state of Texas.

### **Standards for Graduate Preparation**

To meet the foregoing requirements, the following standards for professional practice are established by NASP (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010c). Graduate programs

that are NASP approved, meet specific standards for at least 60 hours of course preparation at the specialist level, and a minimum requirement of 90 hour of coursework at the doctoral level. Ten domains of competencies provide a framework for foundational knowledge and skills in both psychology and education. This particular study focused primarily on the Domain 2.10 concerning legal competency.

Domain 2.10, *Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice*, requires demonstrated knowledge of legal standards and skills in practicum and internship settings to deliver services in a responsible and effective manner. Knowledge “of legal standards and regulations relevant for practice in settings in which school psychologists work” requires “methods for planning and engaging in continuing education” (Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists, 2010, p.16). The Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists (2010) involve demonstration of competency skills that include provision of “services consistent with legal standards and regulations relevant for practice in settings in which school psychologists work,” and call for school psychologists to “engage in career-long self-evaluation and continuing professional development” (p. 16).

### **Training Programs**

There are over 190 NASP-recognized programs in various states of approval, ranging from full to “not approved” status. A program in “not approved” status is in the process of meeting approval standards (National Association of School Psychologists, 2015). Specialist-level (60+ graduate credits) and doctoral-level programs in school psychology provide evidence to the organization of consistency with the NASP Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists (2015) for review prior to program approval. As of the date of this publication, the

American Psychological Association also accredits 64 doctoral-level school psychology programs (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Each of these programs is designed to mirror practice standards outlined by the association. Formal training programs are required to conform to these standards to maintain NASP approval. For example, the Texas State School Psychology Program Student Handbook (2016) requires “entry-level competency” in the legal, ethical, and professional practice domain (p. 6). During supervised field experiences, student performance on a number of competencies is evaluated as they “apply their knowledge and skills in a field-based setting” (Texas State School Psychology Program Student Handbook, 2016, p. 12). The student handbook includes a degree plan and sequence of required courses that includes three-semester hours of special education law: “Ethics, Standards, and Procedures in Professional School Psychology” (Texas State School Psychology Program Student Handbook, 2016, p. 11). The handbook students attain a passing score on the “National School Psychology Certification Examination (Praxis) administered by the Educational Testing Service” (p. 16). The Educational Testing Service indicates that the “Praxis School Psychologist test is based on the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services” (Educational Testing Services, 2015, p. 5). As of the date of this writing, 12 graduate programs in Texas adhere to the standards established by APA and/or NASP described above (Appendix C).

### **Standards for Credentialing**

NASP has also developed a set of training and certification standards as guidance to state agencies for regulating practice (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010b). These standards align with the 10 domains including “completion of an integrated and sequential program of study that is explicitly designed to develop knowledge and practice competencies in

each of the . . . Domains” (p. 4). Domain 2.10, “Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice” requires knowledge of and demonstrated skills “consistent with . . . legal . . . standards” (p. 5). According to the NASP (2010b), “Both formative and summative performance-based evaluations” are recommended for a 600-hour level specialist-level, or 1,200 clock-hour doctoral-level internship that include direct oversight and close supervision (p. 6). In addition, passage of a national exam and an additional year of supervision are required after credentialing. An annual minimum of 20 clock hours of continuing professional development is also mandated for renewal of the national certification standard. Legal practice standards include knowledge of legal regulations, information sources, and continuing education. Practical skill is demonstrated by provision of “services consistent with legal standards and regulations,” and engagement “in career-long self-evaluation and continuing professional development” (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010b, p. 16).

Texas school psychologists meet all of these suggested standards and guidelines. Texas requires a passing score on the jurisprudence examination, designed and administered by the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP) based on state statutes, rules, regulations, board policies and procedures outlined by the state of Texas. This exam incorporates provisions of the Texas Family Code regarding consent for treatment, parent and child rights, access to records, duty to report abuse or neglect, complaint procedures, licensing requirements, research practices, and practice rules that apply to all psychologists practicing within the state. Examinees must obtain a passing score on the exam before they are licensed to practice (Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, 2014).

## **Principles for Professional Ethics**

The NASP “Principles for Professional Ethics” were developed to protect the public and those who receive psychological services and “address the unique circumstances associated with providing school psychological services” (2010d, p. 1-2). NASP recognizes “when school psychologists employed by a school board make decisions in their official roles, such acts are seen as actions by state government” (2010d, p. 2). School Psychologists:

must know and respect the rights of students under the U.S. Constitution and federal and state statutory law. They must balance the authority of parents to make decisions about their children with the needs and rights of (their) children, and the purposes and authority of schools. (2010, p. 2)

The principles:

may require a more stringent standard of conduct than law, and in those situations in which both apply, school psychologists are expected to adhere to the principles. When conflicts between ethics and law occur, school psychologists are expected to take steps to resolve conflicts by problem solving with others and through positive, respected, and legal channels. If not able to resolve the conflict in this manner, they may abide by the law, as long as the resulting actions do not violate basic human rights. (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010, p. 2)

Seventeen ethical principles are organized under four broad themes: (a) respecting the dignity and rights of all persons, (b) professional competence and responsibility, (c) honesty and integrity in professional relationships, and (d) responsibilities to schools, families, and communities, the profession and society (NASP, 2010d, p. 3). These principles are far too extensive, rendering it counterproductive to address all of them within the context of this study.



The reader is instead referred to the source as relevant principles are addressed throughout this study. These standards illustrate the vast extent of knowledge school psychologists must acquire and demonstrate to comply with special education law.

According to the Texas Association of School Psychologists,

The Texas credential that permits the practice of school psychology is called Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP). This license is required by the [Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists \(TSBEP\)](#) to provide school psychological services in Texas public schools. The requirements for the LSSP credential include completion of a graduate degree in school psychology or closely related field, a passing score on the national exam for school psychology and eligibility for certification as a National Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) or educational equivalent. (Texas Association of School Psychologists, 2015).

### **Relevant Research**

Consistent with the 10 practice domains already mentioned, actual practice varies from region to region, from state to state, between districts, schools, and even individual psychologists (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010a). As service provision keeps pace with changes in special education law and the evolution of scientific advances, the roles of school psychologists adjust to the needs of clients. For this reason, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) conducts periodic surveys regarding the professional practices of school psychologists throughout the nation. The most recent survey at the time of this publication indicated almost half of the time spent by practitioners (47%) is spent in evaluations for special education eligibility (Castillo, Curtis, & Gelley, 2012). Service providers reported almost a

quarter of their time was dedicated to intensive intervention promotion and delivery for individuals and groups of students (23.2%) while 36% were committed to systems level services such as early intervention (13.2%), promoting effective instruction (12%), and promoting school-wide social emotional skills (10.8%). These reports added to over 100% because these activities reported were “not mutually exclusive” (p. 6). They occur in conjunction with participation with multidisciplinary evaluation teams in determination of disability (11.4%), student-focused consultation activities (10.4%), participation on intervention teams (8.1%), direct delivery of counseling services to groups and individual students (8.8%), and systems-based consultation activities (5.8%).

Foundational competencies for knowledgeable practice in school psychology include “awareness of legal issues regarding professional activities with individuals, groups, and organizations” (Daly, Doll, Schulte, & Fenning, 2011, p. 877). Professional organizations describe this awareness of legal issues in terms of “competencies related to . . . ethical and legal decisions in the context of psychological practice are identified for entry-level practice” through guidance of the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of School Psychologists literature (Daly, Doll, Schulte, & Fenning, 2011, p. 879). Zaheer and Zirkel (2014) conducted a systematic investigation of the school psychology literature for legal content, finding that few psychology journals contained the quality of legal content required for school psychologists to maintain a sufficient level of legal literacy in applications of First Amendment freedoms of expression, unreasonable search and seizure, and in particular, fourteenth amendment due process rights, and equal protection under the law. Legislation of particular import derived from case law, such as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act, and the

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) were not covered sufficiently according to this investigation. Zaheer and Zirkel (2014) noted that as “state laws have continued to expand,” state legislation and regulations have added specific requirements for individualized educational programs, functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans, and response to intervention” as well as “other more generically applicable state laws concern school psychologist certification, performance evaluation, and child abuse reporting” (p. 1001). This places much of the responsibility for keeping up with changes in state and federal law on the practitioner.

Schimmel and Militello (2007) investigated the legal literacy of 1,317 teachers and found the majority (70%) had taken no course in school law and were largely uninformed by certification or professional development programs. The primary source of information reported tended to be from other teachers. Implications of this lack of specific knowledge resulted in excessive concerns about liability that were unnecessary, and reports by teachers reflecting frequent violations of individual students’ rights. Insufficient legal knowledge can therefore, on the one hand, limit educators from performing their duties in an effective manner, yet on the other hand, cause unnecessary administrative burdens that result from violating the rights of students. In *Wood v. Strickland* (1975), the U.S. Supreme Court held that clear violation of a student’s constitutional rights could result in legal liability for school personnel. The Schimmel & Militello (2007) study found that “the criteria used to establish an acceptable standard of legal knowledge varied” for the educators surveyed in this sample (p. 260). Sixty-five percent of the teachers surveyed said they wished to know more. Could this experience be similar for school psychologists?

In Texas, researchers and TSBEP board members analyzed and presented the most frequent issues and complaints presented to the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP) (Black, Cheramie, Downes, & Spinks, 2014). This presentation indicated that complaint statistics in 2013 involving school psychologists constituted 12 of the 263 complaints disposed of by TSBEP, or 4.5% of the total. In 2014, 5 of the 251 complaints, or 2%, were school psychology related. The most frequent complaints regarding school psychologists involved consent for evaluation and services, and consent for revocation of services by the parent. The most numerous complaint involved maintenance and access to confidential student records, access to test protocols, and privacy/confidentiality issues under FERPA. With this in mind, it appears additional research is merited to address these concerns of clientele, trainers, and practitioners.

### **Summary**

LEAs and SEAs have the responsibility for providing a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) by adhering to the provisions of IDEA. In the public schools, the school psychologist is frequently assigned oversight responsibilities. In corresponding with parents, school psychologists must demonstrate working knowledge of special education law to maintain compliance. As document custodians, school psychologists must have familiarity with the provisions of FERPA. The literature demonstrates training and licensing require functional knowledge of applicable legal requirements as a requisite for competent practice (Daly, Doll, Schulte, & Fenning, 2011; National Association of School Psychologists, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; 2010d; Texas Association of School Psychologists, 2015; Tex. Occ. Code § 501.260; Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, 2014). There is also considerable responsibility placed upon the practitioner for remaining aware of changes. Few studies are available to inform

practitioners or trainers how this is effectively accomplished. One study relating to teachers' knowledge of special education law found unfamiliarity and a need for additional educator training (Schimmel & Militello, 2007). Research found inadequate psychological and school literature available to guide further competent practice (Zaheer & Zirkel, 2014). These data raise questions regarding the state of legal literacy on the part of school psychologists, especially those with limited experience.

Based on these data, the proposed study sets forth an exploration of the legal literacy of school psychologists at various stages of professional development. Schimmel and Militello developed a survey in 2007 that showed significant impact of particular variables to teachers' level of legal knowledge. Using the foregoing study as a model, six variables were identified that appeared to possibly impact the level of legal knowledge over the course of the career of school psychologists. The general assumption was that the level of legal knowledge is adequate at entry level and improves over the course of a career with experience. There appears to be insufficient objective information regarding the degree to which these six variables impact the level of legal knowledge. Therefore, the researcher proposes testing current assumptions and adding to the research base using an exploratory approach.

Special education law and legal precedent have shown continuous evolution over the previous 50 years. Periodic reauthorizations at the behest of parents and advocates, and corresponding statutes codified into a myriad of rules and regulations result in continuous refinements. To consistently meet these dynamic responsibilities, school personnel must be familiar with and remain up to date on the constant changes in school law as reflected in ongoing judicial challenges, precedents, and rules reflecting additional guidance. This especially involves the identification, assessment, evaluation, and development of individualized education plans

that meet the needs of the individual students, and results in appropriate placement decisions. School psychologists often assume a primary staff role within public school districts for oversight and coordination of these requirements that include management, maintenance, storage, and security of confidential records.

The Texas Board of Examiners of Psychologists has the primary role for oversight of school psychologists in Texas (Psychologist's Licensing Act, Title 3 Texas Occupations Code § 501.260). A system of graduate education, certifications, state licensure, and professional training requirements are designed to address the needs of individual practitioners. Competent practice in the provision of services consistent with practice standards must be demonstrated through ongoing professional development. Zirkel and Zirkel (2014) addressed particular competency standards, level, and observations regarding the legal literacy of early career school psychologists. Schimmel and Militello (2007) investigated the legal literacy of educators by surveying teacher knowledge of special education, finding a need and desire for more training. This explorative study examined the association between school psychologists' knowledge about IDEA eligibility requirements and six variables which might impact on that knowledge. These variables were: 1) years of practical experience ("experience"), 2) time spent supervising other school psychologists ("time supervising"), 3) hours of IDEA related training ("legal training"), 4) level of interest in learning more about the IDEA ("interest"), 5) self-assessment of their IDEA knowledge ("perceived knowledge"), and 6) percent of job time spent in evaluating students' IDEA eligibility ("IDEA job time"). The methodology employed to answer these questions is presented in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter includes a description of the methodology employed in this study. Six predictor variables were set up in a multiple regression model to assess their impact on school psychologists' knowledge about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's eligibility requirements, the criterion variable. These predictors were: 1) years of professional experience ("experience"), 2) time spent supervising other school psychologists ("time supervising"), 3) hours of IDEA related training ("legal training"), 4) level of interest in learning more about the IDEA ("interest"), 5) self-assessment of their IDEA knowledge ("perceived knowledge"), and 6) percent of job time spent in evaluating students' IDEA eligibility ("IDEA job time").

The predictors were selected based on prior research, suggesting possible impact of these factors on educators' level of legal knowledge (Schimmel & Militello, 2007). A questionnaire, The Knowledge of Special Education Law (KSEL), was developed by the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection (Appendix B). Development of the KSEL will be discussed in more detail in this chapter. The criterion variable, measure of the IDEA level of legal knowledge ("knowledge"), was also measured using the KSEL. This portion of the survey will also be discussed in more detail in this chapter. The questions comprising the KSEL were derived from the IDEA and its implementing regulations. The values entered into the data base were derived from responses to a survey developed for this study. The procedures used to develop the survey and each item's purpose will be discussed in this section.

The KSEL Questionnaire in Appendix B was the primary instrument for data collection. The KSEL was administered in a survey format to a sample of school psychologists licensed within the state of Texas. The total number of attempts was 122. Only 69 of these cases were

used for the final data analysis. The remaining 53 cases were incomplete and eliminated from the data set for a variety of reasons. An undetermined technical error where the participant consented to take the survey but was not presented the questions affected 39 cases. Ten cases were incomplete due to the participant not completing all the questions and were deleted from the data set. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) suggest “deletion of cases is a reasonable choice if the pattern appears random and if only a very few cases have missing data, and those cases are missing data on different variables” (p. 71). Three participants either declined or did not answer the consent question and were therefore not provided access to continue with the survey. This left 70 complete data sets. Case number 15 was identified through SPSS as a statistical outlier and automatically eliminated from the data set by default. Outliers are known to “lead to both Type I and Type II errors,” and “results that do not generalize except to another sample with the same kind of outlier” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 73). The remaining 69 cases were then used to complete the statistical regression using SPSS and account for the final results reported in chapter 4.

### **Dependent Measure: Knowledge of IDEA Law**

Respondents’ score on the knowledge test of K-12 IDEA eligibility law was selected as the principal criterion variable. A Knowledge Level Index score was derived from the 70-item KSEL questionnaire devised for this study (Appendix B). The questions comprising the Knowledge Level Index score were derived from the IDEA and its implementing regulations and the knowledge criteria identified in Chapter Two of the present study. The IDEA Knowledge Level Index portion of the survey consisted of 61 True-False questions, specifically, items 10 through 70 of the questionnaire. The total number of correct responses were tallied as a raw score, and converted to a percent, so that a perfect score would equal 100%, and participants who



answer no questions correctly would receive a score of 0%. Question 10 was later eliminated from the survey due to an entry error by the researcher, leaving 60 questions relating to the dependent measure. Survey questions 1 through 7 contained questions corresponding to each of six predictors described below as shown in Appendix B. Survey questions 8 and 9 were designed to collect demographic data regarding the sources of legal knowledge and education levels of participants.

### **The Independent Variables**

Each of the six variables uncovered in the literature review were operationalized independently as described in the following paragraphs. The independent variables, once operationalized, were quantified for the purpose of analysis; these values were determined by participants' responses to questions 1 through 7 of a 70-question survey completed by research participants.

#### **Experience**

The first independent variable, *Experience*, measured the cumulative amount of time in which the respondent served as a school psychologist. Question 1 of the survey asked participants "How long have you been employed as a school psychologist?" This variable has implications for the impact of "on the job experience" on school psychologists' acquisition of legal literacy as it pertains to IDEA law. This factor explores the question of whether a school practitioner starting with little or no knowledge makes up for this lack of knowledge over time through on-the-job experience. Would experience render the deficiencies they possessed when they started to work as school psychologists less damaging than it might have been? This variable was measured in years of paid experience rendered as a school psychologist. The following scheme was selected because the responses of graduate students who were completing

their work toward state certification were included in the study. They were coded as level “1.” An employee serving in his first year on-the-job for one year was coded as a level “2” and serving in the second year as a level “3,” etc. Those with more than two but less than 10 years of experience were coded as a level “4,” those with 10-20 years’ experience coded as a level “5,” and those with over 20 years of experience coded as a level “6.” This variable was most often referred to with the generic label “Experience” throughout this report.

### **Time Supervising**

The second predictor, *Time Supervising*, was measured by the amount of time the psychologist spends supervising other psychologists. Accordingly, an indicator was selected for this purpose. Question 2 of the survey asked participants “What percent of your work time do you spend supervising other school psychologists in the provision of psychological services, excluding administrative supervision?” The school psychologists were asked to state from 0 to 100% the amount of time they spend supervising other psychologists. This facilitated a determination of the relationship between an employee’s supervision of other school psychologists and the knowledge they possess about IDEA law. These indicators were derived from self-report of the employee. For ease of data collection, these percentages were broken down into four distinct categories: 0%, less than 25%, 26-50%, and those who supervise other psychologists 51% or more of their work day (Appendix H). These response items were coded, respectively 1, 2, 3, and 4 for ease of analysis and survey administration. This approach avoided reliance on formal job descriptions. The interest here is mainly a practical one in trying to ascertain what employees actually do on the job for direct comparison to how much they know about IDEA in K-12 settings.

It is important to determine whether school psychologists who serve in a managerial or quasi-managerial role possess meaningful knowledge about IDEA eligibility criteria, since they are expected to offer advice to their subordinates about such issues. From the point of view of running an effective organization, it is important to know whether those who supervise others possess sufficient knowledge to perform their supervisory functions. This variable was most often referred to with the generic label “Supervision” throughout this report.

### **Training Hours**

The third predictor was *Training Hours*. It was measured by the amount of prior IDEA legal-type education and training measured in hours was completed by the school psychologist. The total number of trainings hours was determined by combining the total hours from Survey Question 3, pre-service training, with the total number of hours from Survey Question 4, the number of conference hours received after they were licensed.. This variable was most often referred to by its generic label “Training Hours” for the sake of consistency throughout this report.

As previously stated, Survey Question 3 was designed to determine the total number of pre-service training hours, defined as the total number of class hours attended prior to licensing. The number of course hours attended was requested from the participant, for example, a three-credit course was assigned a value of 42 hours based on attending 14 three-hour classes during the course of the semester [ $3 \times 14 = 42$ ]. The participant would then select an answer choice from one of four categories based on the total number of hours. Those with under 5 hours were assigned the first answer choice, those with 6 to 21 hours were assigned the second answer choice. Those with 22 to 50 hours of preservice training were assigned to answer choice 3, and all those respondents with 50 or more hours of preservice training hours were assigned answer

choice 4. In this manner, those with the fewest hours were assigned a value of one, and those with increasingly more hours assigned a higher value of 1 through 4.

Survey Question 4 asked participants to report the number of conference hours received after they were licensed. The categorical answer choices were similar to those described above for question three, both questions yielding a score of 1-4. However, for post-service hours, those with less than 10 hours were assigned the first answer choice, those with 10 to 24 hours were assigned the second answer choice. Those with 24 to 50 hours of preservice training were assigned to answer choice 3, and all those respondents with 50 or more hours of preservice training hours were assigned answer choice 4. For the purpose of quantifying the training variable, the categorical value from survey question three (pre-service training hours) and survey question 4 (post-service training hours) were then added together to represent a combined value. Note that the assigned value for the independent variable representing the combined pre-service and post-service training hours were represented by a variable that ranged from 2 to a total of 8. Although more information may have been derived from exploring pre-service and post-service training and their impact on the level of legal knowledge independently, the original research question was seeking to determine if there was a relationship between the predictor variable, and the criterion variable, not to explore the nature of this relationship. This variable was measured by *the combined number of hours of IDEA law-related training the psychologists received before and after they commenced their work as paid school psychologists*. The variable was most often referred to with the generic label “Training Hours” throughout this report.

### **Legal Interest**

The fourth predictor, school psychologists’ *legal interest* in learning more about IDEA and other aspects of special education law, was measured by asking them what statement best

represented their level of interest in learning more about special education law. Participants were asked on Survey Question 5 “What statement best represents your level of interest in learning more about the IDEA and other aspects of special education law?” Answers choices were presented in a Likert-type format with responses rated as 1) no interest, 2) little interest, 3) some interest, and 4) much interest. This variable was most often referred to with the generic label “Legal Interest” throughout this report.

### **Perceived Knowledge**

The fifth indicator, *Perceived Knowledge* of IDEA law, was measured by asking respondents which statement best represented the extent of their knowledge of IDEA eligibility law. Survey question 6 asked participants to “Indicate your level of legal knowledge as it pertains to IDEA law.” They were provided four choices: “none,” “inadequate,” “adequate” and “proficient.” Scores of 1-2 indicated the responders perceived their actual knowledge as deficient, while scores in the 3-4 range indicated participants considered their knowledge at least adequate. These scores enabled an examination of whether school psychologists’ perceptions as to what they knew about IDEA eligibility comported with their actual knowledge. This variable was most often referred to with the generic label “Perceived Knowledge” throughout this report.

### **Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility**

The sixth variable, percent of work *Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility*, was determined through self-reports. Survey Question 7 asked respondents to report from 0 to 100% of the amount of time they spent working in various special education-related activities. For the purpose of this investigation, special education activities were defined as those prescribed by IDEA law, such as evaluations for eligibility, IEP team planning, preparation, and participation, special education program development and management, individual or group counseling as

prescribed by an IEP, and student consultation for students identified as eligible for services delineated in an IEP.

General education activities were defined as those outside the scope of IDEA mandates, such as systems consultation, general education program management and development, counseling and crisis management services for students that have not been specifically identified as IDEA eligible, 504 eligibility determination and team participation, participation in Response to Intervention (RtI) activities, and consultations for individual students not served under special education. Most administrative activities were identified under this classification unless they were prescribed specifically by or for special education personnel.

This predictor was developed to assist in determining whether knowledge of IDEA differed significantly between psychologists working primarily in the practice of testing for IDEA eligibility, and those employed in a broader role providing a wider range of psychological services within the public schools. Examining the relationship between job duties and IDEA legal knowledge may assist in determining whether training should be differentiated on the basis of daily experience working within IDEA guidelines. For this reason, only the first of 11 response ratings, “time spent in initial and reevaluations for eligibility,” was used for analysis. This variable therefore will be referred to throughout the manuscript as “Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility.” These data were collected and analyzed as a continuous variable using a ratio scale ranging from 0 to 100%. The data derived from the six predictors described above enabled an accurate accounting of effects using multiple regression analysis of the data as described below.

### **Validation of the Instrument**

Creswell (2009) defined *validity* as “whether one can draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on the instrument” (p.149). There are three traditional forms of validity:

content, construct, and criterion. *Content validity* refers to whether the instrument is measuring the content of what is being examined. *Construct validity* refers to whether the instrument accurately measures the concepts being explored. Since the knowledge questions were derived directly from IDEA law and regulations, the content validity appears self-evident. Nevertheless, I proceeded an analysis of the content validity was performed.

The process used for validating the KSEL for this study is detailed below. One of the first steps towards creating an instrument that is valid and reliable for measuring complex constructs is to examine content validity (Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tehb, Lee, & Rauch, 2003). Content validity represents the face validity of whether the measure appears to measure what is purported to measure. We can more precisely evaluate content validity “using a panel of experts” to provide “constructive feedback of the newly developed measure and objective criteria with which to evaluate each item” (Rubio et al., 2003, p. 95). Even though a panel of experts can be somewhat subjective, a structured process adds objectivity. A series of steps for conducting content validity studies was followed for validating the survey developed for this study. First, a minimum of three “content” experts who had published or worked extensively in the field were selected. A minimum of three “lay” experts representing possible research subjects within the sample were also selected to provide feedback on the clarity of the instrument items. These members were selected through personal contacts. Once participants were identified, a cover letter and a response form was mailed to the members with a copy of the KSEL. The response form solicited ratings regarding the clarity and representativeness of each item contained in the questionnaire. Seven participants returned the response forms. Once data were received, two types of analysis were performed, one regarding the clarity of the item, and another regarding the degree the item represents the construct being measured. Interrater agreement assessed “the extent to which the

experts agree” (Rubio et. Al, 2003, p.96). Items that did not meet an interrater agreement threshold of .80 were discarded. The results of this analysis are included in Appendix E. The response forms also contained comment sections. Feedback from the panel members was also incorporated into the KSEL. Once the KSEL was reformatted, the survey was field tested by a sample of three examinees prior to the final distribution consistent with Rubio et.al.’s (2003) validation process.

### **Data Collection**

The Knowledge of Special Education Law (KSEL) Questionnaire (Appendix B) was the primary instrument for data collection. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Arlington reviewed and approved this study and the information within the consent form (Appendix C). After receiving approval, the survey was loaded to an online platform using the Qualtrics system (<https://www.qualtrics.com>). Qualtrics is an online survey company that provides products and options for collecting data from survey participants in a user-friendly and efficient manner. This online product enabled the researcher to both provide and obtain informed consent prior to administering the survey, maintaining confidentiality of the participants’ responses, as well as capturing, storing, and downloading the data collected. A reminder was sent the week following the initial participation request and a final, personalized request was sent two weeks thereafter.

The window for which the survey was available for completion by voluntary recipients and the results recorded extended from March 29, 2016 through September 29, 2017. This approach was selected as an expedient, cost-effective way to collect this range of information from a relatively large sample. The weakness of this method was the reliance of self-report data, as well as subjectivity inherent in the respondents’ interpretation of the survey questions. The



survey was designed to take no more than 30 minutes to complete, and 15-20 minutes for most participants. This survey instrument, developed by the researcher, was modeled after the basic survey design found in Schimmel and Militello (2007).

In order to maximize participation, Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSPs) respondents in the North Texas area were recruited through several methods: attendance and presentation at several regional conferences (DFWRASP); direct to local school psychologists through presentations, personal contacts, and email requests. Specifically, the researcher requested completion of the survey through a poster presentation at TASP and appeals to the Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Association of School Psychologists (DFWRASP). DFWRASP convenes well-attended regional conferences three times a year. Permission was gained from the presiding officers to present the research to members of the conference with requests to participate anonymously by either completing a paper copy of the survey on-site or exercising the option to link via a personal computing device to a predetermined link where the survey could be accessed. A recruiting cover letter (Appendix D) was included as well to request participants. Informed consent was included as the cover page in both the written documents and online survey.

Survey takers were unable to proceed with the survey until they read, indicated they understood, and acknowledged the informed consent form. Two participants refused consent, and one did not answer the informed consent question at all, and therefore were unable to proceed with the survey questions. A copy of the informed consent is located at Appendix C.

### **Sample Size**

In multiple regression, the number of cases, or in this case participants, must substantially exceed the number of predictor variables used in the regression. To obtain a desired number of

respondents, the required sample size was first estimated. According to Wilson, Van Vooris, and Morgan (2007), statistical power is generally acceptable with 95% confidence when a rate of significance is .05 or lower.

Power is represented by rejecting the null hypothesis correctly when there is a significant difference between the two sample populations compared. The larger a sample, the more representative it is of the population being sampled (Wilson, Van Vooris, & Morgan, 2007). There will always exist some degree of error in measurement, represented by the difference between the mean of the sample and the mean of the population. The standard error of measurement (*SEM*) is an estimate of that difference. A larger sample size will increase power and decrease the likelihood for a false positive.

To determine an adequate sample size “for regression equations using six or more predictors, an absolute minimum of 10 participants per predictor variable is appropriate,” and “a researcher would have better power to detect a small effect size with approximately 30 participants per variable” (p. 48). Since there are six predictor variables, a 10 to one ratio requires at least 60 subjects and the more rigorous standard of 30 participants per variable requires 180 subjects.

To facilitate the completion and submission of a sufficient number of participants, the literature was reviewed for improving the response rate for web-based surveys. Research concerning improved response rates for web-based surveys showed that post-incentives did not significantly improve completion rates (Sánchez-Fernández, Muñoz-Leiva, Montoro-Rios, 2011). These findings also suggested personalized reminders, such as e-mail messages, kept to a lower number, attain the best completion rates (p. 507). Based on this information, the researcher

initially decided that added incentives were not economical as a means to necessary to improve the number of surveys completed.

### **Data Analysis**

The Statistical Package for the Software Sciences (SPSS) version 24 (2016) was used to perform analysis of the data collected. The Knowledge Level Index was calculated in SPSS and assigned each correct answer one point with each incorrect answer receiving a value of zero. A Knowledge Level Index score was then automatically calculated as a percent correct, representing the criterion variable. The criterion variable, the Knowledge Level Index score, was entered as a continuous measure based on a percentage of correct answers. Predictor variables 1-5 were measured on an ordinal scale, and predictor variable 6 as a continuous measure based on a percentage of work time. Predictor variables were then examined in terms of their relationship to the Knowledge Level Index score. A series of statistical processes were conducted using SPSS with the broad goal to account for the variance in the scores observed on the criterion variable, Knowledge Level Index score.

The statistical technique selected for the principal analyses in this study was multiple regression. Multiple regression statistics were used as a prediction tool by analyzing the Knowledge Level Index score for each of the six independent variables selected for this model. Thus, knowledge of each of the six predictors enabled a determination through multiple regressions of the independent effects of each predictor on the Knowledge Level Index score of the respondents as well as determining the efficacy of the model as a whole.

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), there are several analytic strategies employed in such an analysis including standard and stepwise regression approaches. The standard model was selected and used by the researcher. Using the standard model, “all IVs enter

into the regression equation at once” to evaluate each variable “in terms of what it adds to the prediction” model (p. 136). The authors described this method as “a shotgun approach . . . to simply assess relationships among variables and answer the basic question of multiple correlation” (p.143). This strategy was deemed appropriate for this analysis by the researcher since there was no specific theoretical approach undergirding this study; in other words, the exploratory nature of this investigation warranted use of the entry method in the software employed rather than other approaches based on specific predictions about the criterion variable.

Prior to assessing relationships between the independent and dependent variables, key assumptions in the use of linear regression were addressed through a pre-analysis data screening. Scatterplot matrices were screened for “outliers . . . a point that seems very out of place when compared to the other points” (Bluman, 2008, p. 539). Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) indicated “Linearity between two variables is assessed roughly by inspection of bivariate scatterplots” (p. 83). A review of the bivariate scatterplot matrices for each relationship in SPSS FREQUENCIES for multivariate normality indicated a linear relationship between variables that were normally distributed and homoscedastic, important in multivariate analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Multiple regression also produces what are referred to as  $R^2$  and *adjusted  $R^2$*  statistics. The model selected for this study was designed to derive the  $R^2$  relationship between the six predictors taken as a whole and the knowledge scores. Adjusted  $R^2$  represents an alternate approach to simple  $R^2$  and may provide superior statistic for use of a prediction model such as the one employed here. This is because a statistical anomaly results in an  $R^2$  statistic that tend to overestimate the success of the model when later applied in an actual context (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Tabachnik and Fidell (2007) suggested that “the smaller the sample the greater the overestimation. For this reason . . . adjustment is made for expected inflation in sample  $R$ ” (p.

153). This adjustment for overestimate results in a recalculation to produce the *adjusted R<sup>2</sup>*; it takes into account the number of variables in the model and the number of observations, that is, participants in the study. This calculation reduces margin of error inherent in the more simplistic *R<sup>2</sup>* model.

### **Design Considerations**

Statistical analyses in SPSS can help us account for collinearity. Multicollinearity occurs when high correlations are detected between two or more predictor variables. Multicollinearity can “occur when variables are too highly correlated . . . and contain redundant information . . . not all needed for the same analysis” and may “inflate the size of error” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, pp. 88-89). According to Bluman (2008), “Perfect or near-perfect correlations among variables can threaten a multivariate analysis” (p. 60). In the best of all worlds, our six predictors should be correlated with the criterion variable, but not highly correlated with one another; however, such conditions rarely exist in the real world. High correlations among predictors may create problems when drawing inferences about the relative contribution of each individual predictor variable to the success of the model as measured by *R<sup>2</sup>*, even as adjusted. The software selected by the researcher, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), enabled the investigator to better account for this possibility, providing additional calculations to detect adverse collinearity effects. Results of this analysis are reported in the following chapter. As mentioned above, an express theory did not undergird the research model; thus, I employed SPSS’s “simultaneous method” of data entry (Kraha, Turner, Nimon, Zietek, & Henson, 2012; Li, et al., 1998). Overall, the simultaneous approach was selected for its relative ease of interpreting the results in the absence of a preexisting theoretical model.

## **Summary**

The research design developed in this chapter was based on variables identified during the literature review that might impact the level of legal knowledge of school psychologists regarding IDEA eligibility law. These were: experience level, time spent in supervision, training hours, legal interest, perceived knowledge, and time spent in evaluating eligibility. The data set was derived from 69 complete surveys from a sample of school psychologists employed in the North Texas region.

A regression analysis was selected to determine if the relationships between the identified predictor variables were strong enough to associate an observable impact on levels of knowledge regarding IDEA eligibility law. The survey instrument was developed and validated to enable performance of the calculations necessary to determine the relationship between the predictors and the knowledge variable. Once data from a sufficient number of participants were collected, SPSS software V24 (2016) was selected to conduct the regression analysis.

## Chapter 4

### Results

This chapter reports the results of the multiple regression analysis performed on the six predictor variables (i.e., experience, time supervising, legal training, interest level, perceive knowledge, supervisory time) and knowledge about IDEA eligibility among a sample of 69 school psychologists from North Texas. SPSS version 24 (2016) was used to perform the analysis on the data set.

#### Collinearity Statistics

Recall from the previous chapter regarding methodology, SPSS includes collinearity diagnostics that create “tolerance” statistics for inclusion of variables (p. 48). Table 4.1 displays the collinearity statistics. One column shows the so-called *tolerance statistic*; the other the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The influence of one predictor-IV on all the others is analyzed through these tolerance levels produced in the linear regression analysis, calculated as  $T=1-R^2$ , while  $T>0.1$  indicates multicollinearity. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is computed as  $1/T$ , with a  $VIF>10$  indicating that multicollinearity is present. The analysis of the predictor variables in the current study indicates multicollinearity is not sufficiently large to make calculation of the multiple regression equation inappropriate.

Table 4.1

*Collinearity Statistics for Predictor Variables*

	Tolerance	VIF
Experience	.572	1.749
Time Spent Supervising	.760	1.315
Legal Education/Training Hours	.667	1.532
Level of Interest	.890	1.124
Perceived Knowledge Score	.758	1.319
Percent of time in evaluation	.759	1.318

**Model Summary and Analysis of Variance**

Since the research model was exploratory in nature and not based on an express theory, the “simultaneous method” of data entry was selected (Kraha, Turner, Nimon, Zietek, & Henson, 2012; Li, et al., 1998). Table 4.2 displays the model summary showing the variance in the knowledge scores accounted for by the six predictors. The  $r^2 = .223$  obtained indicates that predictors explain 22% of the variance. Calculation of the adjusted  $R^2$  reduced this value to .148. Recall from the previous chapter that a statistical anomaly results in an  $R^2$  statistic that tends to overestimate the success of the model when later applied in an actual context (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Tabachnik and Fidell (2007) suggested that “the smaller the sample the greater the overestimation. For this reason . . . adjustment is made for expected inflation in sample  $R^2$ ” (p. 153). This additional calculation reduces margin of error inherent in the more simplistic  $R^2$  model. The adjusted  $R^2$  calculation in our model revealed that knowledge of IDEA accounted for 14.8% of the overall variance.



Table 4.2

*Estimated Variance in the Knowledge Level Index Scores Accounted for by the Six Predictors*

<u>Model</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Adjust. R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>S.E. of the Estimate</u>
1	472	223	.148	3.79365

Performing an analysis of variance with all the predictors entered and the Knowledge Level Index score as the dependent variable indicated the *overall model* was *significant* [( $F(6, 62) = 2.968, p < .05$ ]. These results are display in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Analysis of Variance on the Predictors and IDEA Eligibility Knowledge Level Index Variable<sup>b</sup>*

<u>Model</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig</u>
Regression	256.262	6	42.710	2.968	.013
Residual	892.289	62	14.392		
Total	1148.551	68			

- a. Predictors: (Constant);  
 (1) Experience level;  
 (2) Time spent in supervision;  
 (3) Training hours;  
 (4) Legal interest;  
 (5) Perceived knowledge; and  
 (6) Time spent evaluating eligibility.

b. Dependent Variable: test score

**Coefficients of Determination**

Table 4.4 shows the results of an analysis to determine the impact of each predictor variable on the criterion variable, or “correlation.” According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), “Correlation is the measure of the size and direction of the linear relationship between two variables” (p. 56). Since all the predictor variables were entered using “the standard, or simultaneous model,” “each IV is evaluated in terms of what it adds to the prediction of the DV”

(Bluman, 2008, p. 136). Each variable was “assessed as if it had entered the regression after all the other IVs had entered” (Bluman, 2008, p. 136). A value of .05 alpha level was established for these tests. This analysis revealed that two of the six independent predictor values had a significant impact on the dependent criterion value, level of Knowledge Level Index scores. These results are displayed in Table 4.4.

It can be seen that only Experience and Percent of Time in Evaluation had a significant relationship with the Knowledge Level Index scores. Table 4.4 shows the obtained standardized Beta values for the model. Standardized *Betas* indicate how strongly each predictor variable influences the criterion variable (Freedman, 2009). The use of the standardized *beta* coefficient enables the researcher to make comparisons among the predictors by standardizing the variables for comparison. Standardization ensures each of the variables being compared have a mean of 0, and a standardized deviation of 1. Standardized beta coefficients are interpreted in a way that indicates the contribution of each variable to the model; it reflects the predicted outcome of the criterion variable for every one-unit increase in the predictor variable (Freedman, 2009). A large standardized beta value indicates that a unit change in a predictor has a large effect on the criterion variable. For the two variables obtaining statistical significance in this model the following results were obtained:

1. For each unit change in standard deviation in school psychologists’ experience there was an increase of .363 standard deviations in their knowledge scores.

2. For each unit change in standard deviation in the amount of time school psychologists spent performing IDEA evaluations there was an increase of .323 standard deviations in their knowledge scores.

Table 4.4

*Independent Predictor Values Impact on Knowledge Level Index Scores*

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>Standardized t</i> <i>Beta Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Experience	1.166	.389	.363*	2.996	.004
Time Spent Supervising	.997	.712	.179	1.401	.166
Legal Education/Training Hours	.326	.373	.113	.873	.386
Level of Legal Interest	.209	.677	.036	.309	.759
Perceived Knowledge Score	.291	.954	.039	.305	.761
Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility	.053	.021	.323**	2.516	.014

\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .05$ .

Time Spent Supervising Other School Psychologists, Training Hours, Level of Interest in Learning More about IDEA, and the Perceived Level of Legal Knowledge were not significant predictors in this model. These results indicate that among the variables studied, on-the-job learning, whether measured through time on the job or proportion of time spent performing IDEA related assessments, were the most important factors in determining how much school psychologists know about IDEA eligibility. The implications of these results are discussed more fully in the next chapter.

**Analysis of Research Questions**

Based on these data, two significant predictors emerged: Experience Level and Percent of Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility.

**Research Question #1**

What is the impact the cumulative amount of time in which the employee had served as a psychologist on knowledge of IDEA law, specifically its special education eligibility requirements? Regression analysis indicated the level of Experience had significant effect on the

predicted Knowledge Level Index score as reflected on the KSEL. Experience was found to be a significant predictor of the Knowledge Level Index score at the  $p < .01$  level (standardized  $\beta = .363, p = .004$ ).

### **Research Question #2**

What is the impact of the percent of job time the psychologist spends supervising other psychologists on their knowledge level in IDEA law, specifically in the area of special education eligibility (supervision)? Supervision was not a significant predictor of performance on the Knowledge Level Index score at the  $p < .05$  alpha level (standardized  $\beta = .179, p = .116$ ).

### **Research Question #3**

What is the impact of IDEA legal training on psychologists' knowledge in IDEA eligibility requirements (training hours)? Training Hours was not a significant predictor of the Knowledge Level Index score at the  $p < .05$  alpha level (standardized  $\beta = .113, p = .386$ ).

### **Research Question #4**

What is the relationship between school psychologists' knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements and their interest in learning more about IDEA law? Legal Interest was not a significant predictor of the Knowledge Level Index score at the  $p < .05$  alpha level (standardized  $\beta = .036, p = .759$ ).

### **Research Question #5**

To what extent do school psychologists' perceptions of their knowledge correspond to their actual knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements? There was a nonsignificant correlation of  $.039$  ( $p = n.s$ ) between Perceived Level of legal knowledge and the Knowledge Level Index score (standardized  $\beta = .039, p = .761$ ).

## **Research Question #6**

What is the relationship between amounts of on the job time spent performing special education evaluations and knowledge of IDEA's eligibility requirements? Multiple regression analysis indicated the amount of Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility had a positive association with the Knowledge Level Index score on the KSEL. (standardized  $\beta = .323, p=.014$ ).

### **Summary**

A multiple regression analysis employing a simultaneous entry approach was deployed to examine the relationship between six predictor variables; 1) Experience, 2) Supervision, 3) Training Hours, 4) Legal Interest, 5) Perceived Knowledge, and 6) Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility; and knowledge of IDEA's eligibility requirements as reflected by the Knowledge Level Index score derived from the KSEL for a sample of 69 school psychologists. The model as a whole accounted for 22.3% of the estimated variance in knowledge scores unadjusted, and 14.8% when adjusted calculations were performed. An analysis of variance on the data set indicated the overall model was statistically significant [ $F(6, 62) = 2.968, p < .05$ ]. Examination of the standardized beta coefficients for the model revealed that the Experience and Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility attained significance as predictors of the Knowledge Level Index scores regarding IDEA eligibility requirements. The implications of these results for school psychologist training and practice are discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

A multiple regression analysis was performed employing a simultaneous entry approach in an exploratory investigation attempting to account for variation in school psychologists' knowledge about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") eligibility requirements. The effect of six predictor variables on the criterion variable were examined. These included Experience as a school psychologist, in years; percent of time spent in Supervision of other psychologists; IDEA legal education, measured in Training Hours; level of Legal Interest in learning more about the IDEA; psychologist Perceived level of personal Knowledge of IDEA law; and the amount of Time on the job Spent Evaluating IDEA Eligibility in percent. Sixty-nine complete surveys finished by volunteer school -psychologists formed the basis of the data set.

The model as a whole accounted for 22.3% of the variance in knowledge scores unadjusted and 14.8% when adjusted calculations were performed on the  $R^2$  statistic. An analysis of variance on the data set indicated the overall model was statistically significant. [ $F=2.968$ ,  $p=.013$ ]. Standardized beta coefficients for the model revealed that only the experience on the job (standardized  $\beta = .363$ ,  $p=.004$ ) and time spent evaluating students for IDEA eligibility (standardized  $\beta = .323$ ,  $p=.014$ ) attained statistical significance. These were  $t=2.996$ ,  $p=.004$  and  $t=2.516$ ,  $p=.014$ , respectively. Increase in the values for these predictors were associated with an increase in IDEA eligibility knowledge.

Notable among the results was the fact that *formal legal training and hours of study* of IDEA law was not an effective predictor of IDEA knowledge. This suggests that the graduate training received by school psychologists in this area may be inadequate. If the goal of graduate

training is to prepare school psychologists in confronting IDEA-related issues, especially student-eligibility criteria, this training apparently fell short of achieving this objective for this group. This deficiency may pose a threat to their ability to correctly interpret the results of students' assessments in an IDEA context. The implications of this outcome might be to expand formal IDEA-eligibility training for school psychologists including substantial internship exercises incorporating IDEA-related practice sessions.

The absence of a meaningful relationship between *perceived knowledge* and actual knowledge may indicate that school psychologists believe they know more about IDEA eligibility than they actually do. This gap in self-perception may serve as a disincentive for them to attend professional development and continuing education programs. After all, if you believe your knowledge base is sufficient to perform legally related job functions, then you might be less inclined to attend education-related programs to overcome a deficiency of which you are unaware. A practice implication of this result would be to periodically test school psychologists on IDEA-related knowledge and provide these practitioners with regular feedback on the results. Moreover, policies which mandate additional training when school psychologist knowledge scores were deemed deficient might improve the quality of services rendered to the students they serve.

The absence of a significant relationship between time spent supervising other psychologists and level of IDEA knowledge is also a matter of concern. If the persons assigned to supervisory duties are the ones who guide other psychologists, then it may be the case that the oversight the psychologists receive is inadequate. The unfortunate metaphor about the "blind leading the blind" may be true here. If so, policies should be considered that require those assigned supervision of other psychologist meet a higher level of competency standards in IDEA

knowledge that qualify them for this important role. The risk of assuming an adequate level of knowledge in IDEA law required in a supervisory capacity to ensure an adequate level of professional competence seems substantial.

The level of Legal Interest in learning more about legal matters bore no fruit in terms of statistical significance. The meaning of this result is difficult to interpret. In the Schimmel and Militello (2007) study that examined the legal literacy of teachers, a significant relationship between lack of knowledge and interest in learning more was revealed. Their study found 70% of the teachers surveyed had not taken a course in school law, and were largely uninterested, yet found a corresponding number (65%) were interested in learning more.

It could be argued that school psychologists did not express an interest in additional training because they perceived their level of knowledge about IDEA eligibility to be adequate. If true, this disparity between perceived knowledge and actual knowledge would be unfortunate since, unlike Schimmel and Militello's (2007) subjects, there would be less incentive to learn more because their perceived level of IDEA knowledge would be deemed adequate.

As presented in the literature review, graduate program training standards are extensive and comprehensive, and include both practicum-based demonstrations of competence as well as a supervised internship prior to the student being awarded the required degree. In addition, "the requirements for licensure as a specialist in school psychology are set forth in Board rule 463.9 and include "passage of the National School Psychology Examination" as well as "the Jurisprudence Examination" (Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, How to Become Licensed, Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, para. 5). As described by the Educational Testing Service (2015), "the Praxis School Psychologist test is based on the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological



Services” (p. 5). The “Praxis Study Companion” indicates 31%, or 44 of the 140 questions addressing “Foundations of School Psychological School Service Delivery” include questions relating to legal issues, laws, regulations, and relevant case law (p. 9). The “Content of the Jurisprudence Examination” includes rules and laws governing practice and supervision guidelines (Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, 2018). Note the broad application on service delivery on the PRAXIS national exam, and the level of specificity on the jurisprudence examination at the state level on rules and laws of practice, may not approach the level of specificity required upon licensure to effectively perform evaluations under IDEA mandates. These results may raise questions whether a concordance between the level of knowledge required to evaluate eligibility under IDEA mandates in practice are in alignment with those required to pass state requirements for licensure. These results suggest that whatever the level of knowledge is acquired in graduate program training might be insufficient to inform school psychologists at the entry level. Further examination will be required to validate this inference with additional research that takes into account the actual content of the jurisprudence examination.

Finally, the state-board requires supervision of licensed school psychology “trainees” before they are even licensed to practice independently. Although continuing professional development is both an expectation and a requirement, it might be the case that many licensed school psychologists consider their level of competence well-demonstrated, and for that reason do not seek additional training beyond these requirements. This interpretation of the results would, of course, be subject to further research to verify or reject this explanation. The confidence graduates and trainees place in their comprehensive preparation and demonstration of competence prior to licensing may not be justified; this inference cannot however be known with

any degree of certainty without further examination of trainees and licensees themselves, perhaps through well-designed surveys to address these questions.

The majority of educators in the Schimmel and Militello (2007) study expressed a need for additional training they perceived as inadequate. This exploratory analysis did not find similar results, but on the whole, does suggest self-perceptions may be important to accurately assessing the need for, and provision of additional, targeted training and development to enable school psychologists to “engage in career-long self-evaluation and continuing professional development” (Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists, 2010, p. 16). Perhaps, rather than relying on a broad foundation of special education law competencies, a more defined set of essential skills and knowledge can assist practitioners and trainers to identify specific competencies, gaps, and needs for school psychologists which could lead to improvements in program design, personal assessment of competencies and needs, and more effective practice at the entry level for newly licensed school psychologists.

Most important perhaps was the fact that the results showed significant connections between both experience in the field, measured in years and job time spent evaluating IDEA eligibility, and the knowledge scores. This practice-based outcome suggests that what school psychologists know about IDEA eligibility derives from experience over time as an incident of performing their jobs. While it would certainly be expected that an increase in experience would enhance knowledge over time, it may be that relying on happenstance is a poor way to induct and train school psychologists.

Such a haphazard approach implies there are minimal controls for insuring individual competence in this important practice area. Moreover, the very low overall knowledge scores may indicate that even though knowledge improved over time, the absolute level of knowledge

displayed by even the experienced practitioners was rather low. This reinforces the comments made above about the need for IDEA-related training about student eligibility and perhaps in other IDEA law areas as well.

Despite the significant association revealed between experience and proportion of job time devoted to IDEA assessment, and eligibility, the model as a whole accounted for a modest proportion of variance in the criterion variable, IDEA eligibility knowledge. Nevertheless, the data suggest that research ought to be conducted in this important area of graduate training, in school psychology, and in the in-service process once the graduates attain public school employment. By reason of the forgoing comments, research questions posed at the outset of the study may be answered as follows.

### **Key Findings**

The following section is organized by research question and ties in literature from Chapter Two of the present study with key findings and discussion.

#### **Research Question #1**

What is the impact the cumulative amount of time in which the employee has served as a psychologist on knowledge of IDEA law, specifically its special education eligibility requirements (experience)?

Regression analysis indicated the level of Experience had significant effect on the predicted KSEL Knowledge Level Index score. Experience was found to be a significant predictor of knowledge at the  $p < .01$  level (standardized  $\beta = .363$ ,  $p = .004$ ).

These results show as years of experience increased, the level of knowledge in IDEA eligibility also increased. Prior to licensing, school psychologists must demonstrate adequate knowledge standards and skills for legal, ethical, and professional practice standards for

credentialing (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010b). In Texas, school psychologists are required to maintain an annual minimum of 20 clock hours of continuing education to ensure practitioners remain abreast of changes in both federal and state requirements and case law that affects the practice of school psychology (Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, 2014). It would appear that this IDEA-related legal education should be included in the mandated graduate curriculum. Learning on-the job and through professional development after licensure is not sufficient. The level of legal knowledge is a critical skill that should require demonstrated proficiency upon licensure and assumption of independent, non-supervised practice.

### **Research Question #2**

What is the impact of the percent of on-the-job time psychologists spend supervising other psychologists on their knowledge level in IDEA law, specifically in the area of special education eligibility (supervision)?

Regression analysis indicated there was a nonsignificant correlation of .179 ( $p = n.s$ ) between time spent in Supervision of other psychologists and the Knowledge Level Index score. Supervision was not a significant predictor of knowledge at the  $p < .05$  alpha level (standardized  $\beta = .179, p = .116$ ).

Recall that NASP professional training and certification standards recommend and TSBEP standards require “direct oversight and close supervision” during the internship and an additional year of supervision after credentialing (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010b, p. 6). Entry-level competencies in the legal, ethical, and practice domains are demonstrated during these field experiences while under direct supervision (Texas State School Psychology Program Student Handbook, 2013). There may often be an assumption that the most

experienced and knowledgeable licensed school psychologists provide direct supervision to interns and trainees; yet, there are no requirements beyond the “minimum of three years of experience providing psychological services within the public school system without supervision” (22 Tex. Admin. Code § 465.2). The data here indicates a weak relationship between hours spent supervising other psychologists and IDEA legal knowledge. This outcome suggests psychologists assigned supervisory duties over other psychologists may require further training in this regard. Otherwise those inducted into the school systems and employed over longer periods may be deprived of supervision they require.

### **Research Question #3**

What is the impact of the extent of IDEA legal Training Hours the psychologist had received on their level of knowledge about IDEA eligibility law?

The regression analysis resulted in a nonsignificant correlation of .113 ( $p = n.s$ ) between number of legal Training Hours and the Knowledge Level Index score. Legal Training and Education were not a significant predictor of knowledge at the  $p < .05$  alpha level (standardized  $\beta = .113, p = .386$ ).

Since this study did not investigate the specific course content associated with the hours of instruction received by the respondents it may be the case that the curriculum did not address the vital area of IDEA eligibility in any detail. If so, this may reveal a serious programming gap may exist which needs to be filled. Given the centrality of IDEA law and practice to school psychology practice this need should receive further study quickly.

### **Research Question #4**

What is the relationship between school psychologists' knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements and their interest in learning more about IDEA law (legal interest)?

Regression analysis resulted in a nonsignificant correlation of .036 ( $p = n.s$ ) between Level of Legal Interest in and the Knowledge Level Index score. Legal Interest was not a significant predictor of knowledge at the  $p < .05$  alpha level (standardized  $\beta = .036$ ,  $p = .759$ ).

In the study by Schimmel and Militello (2007), there was a negative relationship between the level of legal literacy and an interest in learning more about special education law. The less teachers knew, the more interest they had in learning more. That relationship was not found in the results of our current study. These outcomes suggest a relative confidence in performing effectively in their current roles and the level of knowledge attained regardless of their actual level of knowledge. Our current sample of school psychologists appear to display a false sense of confidence about their IDEA eligibility knowledge. This may have occurred because they have not received adequate feedback about what they know, nor received sufficient training to accurately assess their knowledge in this area.

### **Research Question #5**

To what extent do school psychologists' perceptions of their knowledge correspond to their actual knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements (perceived knowledge)? Perceived Knowledge was not a significant predictor of actual knowledge at the  $p < .05$  alpha level (standardized  $\beta = .039$ ,  $p = .761$ ).

Professional competence and responsibility are core principles of proficiency that provide a framework for school psychologists to guide their own development, charging each with personal responsibility for protecting their clients and maintaining the public trust (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010d). It seems here that school psychologists may have a poor grasp of their knowledge of IDEA law since the relationship between demonstrated and

actual knowledge was rather attenuated. As with other aspects of this study this may reflect the limited feedback and training they have received in this area of specialized practice.

### **Research Question #6**

What is the relationship between amount of on the job time which is spent performing special education evaluations and knowledge of IDEA's eligibility requirements?

Multiple regression analysis indicated the amount of time spent conducting special education evaluations had significant effect on the predicted KSEL index score. Time Spent Evaluating Eligibility significantly predicted the Knowledge Level Index score (standardized  $\beta = .323, p=.014$ ).

NASP reported at the time of this study that almost half the time spent by practitioners was in evaluating students for special education eligibility (Castillo, Curtis, & Gelley, 2012). Of the 69 cases analyzed in this sample, an average of 42% of the day was spent evaluating students for special education eligibility. These scores ranged from 0% to those that reported their entire day spent in evaluation. Although the distribution of responses skewed towards the lower end of the percentage of the day with a mode of 40%, the current sample was for the most part evenly distributed across the spectrum regarding time spent in special education evaluation. This provided an opportunity to gain a wide perspective on a range of daily experience.

Since the other variables were held constant while the effects of the proportion of time spent performing IDEA-related activities on IDEA knowledge was measured, the results may not be surprising: The more time you spend performing a function, the more you presumably will learn from such engagement. However, since IDEA-related education did not appear to impact psychologists' knowledge it should be concerning that this relationship and the one revealed between years on the job and IDEA knowledge indicates this learning results from mere

happenstance. Given the generally low knowledge demonstrated on average this should be an unreliable means on which to rely in assuring psychologists know about IDEA to implement their crucial responsibilities.

The varied duties assigned to school psychologists provides an expansive range of possibilities for future research involving school psychologists and their knowledge of pertinent legal requirements. These areas included consent for evaluation, consent for services, and consent for revocation of services. Response to Intervention, rules for conducting a comprehensive assessment, and the identification of eligibility for special education services can be added to the survey measure, or specifically evaluated. Development of Individualized Education Plans are quite detailed in the law, as are rules and procedures for placement in the Least Restrictive Environment. The provisions of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) are yet another area that requires extensive knowledge of standards for privacy, confidentiality as well as management, maintenance, and access to records. Future studies can draw on the model presented in this research to modify or replicate these results. Careful observation of the similarities and differences can provide more in-depth knowledge in the area of professional development.

Knowledgeable practice can also include provisions of state Family Codes regarding consent for treatment, reporting abuse and neglect, and procedures for filing complaints. State credentialing standards and supervision requirements for new licensees are also relevant. These expanded conceptualizations of entry-level competency and basic skills provide frameworks for not only evaluating the level of legal knowledge, but a more definitive basis for establishing and maintaining these standards through self-assessment and planning of continuing professional development.



## **Limitations**

The current exploratory study sought to identify the current assumptions regarding the legal knowledge of practicing school psychologists and apply objective measures to test assumptions regarding the adequacy of legal literacy of school psychologists. Without an explicit theory guiding this research, this study intended to build a base of knowledge to support limited theoretical perspectives that may be helpful in planning training and professional development. At this time, sufficient empirical evidence is lacking. However, future studies can draw on particular insights that build on these results.

The criteria for establishing an objective measure of an “adequate” level of legal knowledge was not included in this study. Although the results revealed, on average, a poor percentage of correct responses by the participants, this does not necessarily mean psychologists in the study are poorly prepared to perform their duties; rather it suggests their knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements is rudimentary. Professional standards may have to be clarified to match minimally acceptable IDEA-based legal knowledge with school psychologists-based competencies.

Additional studies with larger and different samples should be performed as a follow-up to this study to determine if replication will yield similar outcomes. The findings of this study may be validated or refuted with different samples; but in either case, the knowledge base will uncover differences that can be informative. Building the knowledge base in this sparsely researched area provides an expanded set of objective data drawn upon by future researchers, providing data-informed decision-making capability for program development purposes.

The training variable was measured by a combined number of hours in coursework and in-service training. An absence of relationship between total hours of study and levels of IDEA

knowledge were the result of questions that broadly measured exposure to IDEA law. A deeper analysis can be implemented by focusing questions on specific elements of IDEA eligibility rather than overall IDEA training. More refined inquiries may uncover specific areas where curriculum in school psychology training may be improved. The results of follow-up studies can be useful for refining curriculum in a dynamic and responsive manner prior to psychologists entering the field. Similarly, knowledge assessments may be useful informing the in-service process for those psychologists already in paid employment.

This study was primarily exploratory and included the development of a design that could more objectively test some commonly held assumptions regarding training, qualifications, and continuous training and development of school psychologists throughout the career span. These results by no means suggest similar conclusions may be made regarding larger populations and should be critically examined through peer review. Many variables could have affected the results and outcomes of this small, regional sample of school psychologists. Researchers may wish to expand on the knowledge base by replicating the study and comparing results across regions and samples.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between experience as a school psychologist, time spent in supervising other school psychologists, training hours, interest in learning more about the IDEA, perceived self-knowledge of IDEA requirements, and time spent in evaluating students for IDEA eligibility and school psychologist's level of knowledge about IDEA eligibility requirements. A survey reflecting standards and competencies for practice was developed and administered to a sample of school psychologists licensed to practice in the state of Texas. A multiple regression analysis was performed on the data set. Among the predictors

studied, only experience and time spent evaluating eligibility had a significant impact on the level of legal knowledge of IDEA eligibility requirements. Implications for training and practice including new perspectives in design and development of graduate training and professional development as well as advancement of tools to assess the adequacy of current programs and development of continuing educational programming curriculum for school psychologists were discussed.

Appendix A  
IRB Approval Form



**Institutional Review Board  
Notification of Exemption**

January 29, 2016

Christian Walter Rewoldt  
Dr. Lewis M. Wasserman  
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies  
Box 19575

Protocol Number: 2016-0023

Protocol Title: *An Investigation into School Psychologists' Knowledge of the Individuals with Disabilities Act and its Implications for Professional Practice*

**EXEMPTION DETERMINATION**

The UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, or designee, has reviewed the above referenced study and found that it qualified for exemption under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced at Title 45CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subject; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You are therefore authorized to begin the research as of **January 29, 2016**.

Pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b)(4)(iii), investigators are required to, “promptly report to the IRB **any** proposed changes in the research activity, and to ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, are **not initiated without prior IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject.” All proposed changes to the research must be submitted via the electronic submission system prior to implementation. Please also be advised that as the principal investigator, you are required to report local adverse (unanticipated) events to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services within 24 hours of the occurrence or upon acknowledgement of the occurrence. All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented Human Subject Protection (HSP) Training on file with this office. Completion certificates are valid for 2 years from completion date.

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human research subjects. Should you have questions or require further assistance, please contact Regulatory Services at [regulatoryservices@uta.edu](mailto:regulatoryservices@uta.edu) or 817-272-2105.



March 24 2016

Christian Rewoldt  
Dr. Lewis Wasserman  
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies  
Box 19575

**IRB No.:** 2016-0023

**Title:** *An Investigation into School Psychologists' Knowledge of the Individuals with Disabilities Act and its Implications for Professional Practice*

### EXEMPT MINOR MODIFICATION APPROVAL MEMO

The UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (UTA IRB) Chair (or designee) reviewed and approved the modification(s) to this exempt protocol on **March 24, 2016** in accordance with Title 45 CFR 46.101(b). Therefore, you are authorized to conduct your research. The modification(s), indicated below, was/were deemed minor and appropriate for exempt determination/acknowledgment review.

- Revised the Informed Consent to fit the format of survey administration on Qualtrics; the consent will now be included as the first question
- Revised the language of several sections of the Informed Consent for brevity and format
- Revised the format of the survey instrument, and included minor revisions to the questions

Pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b) (4) (iii), investigators are required to, “promptly report to the IRB ***any*** proposed changes in the research activity, and ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, **are not initiated without IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject.”

The modification approval will additionally be presented to the convened board for full IRB acknowledgment [45 CFR 46.110(c)]. All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented Human Subjects Protection (HSP) training on file with the UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services.

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human research subjects. Should you have questions or require further assistance, please contact Regulatory Services at [regulatoryservices@uta.edu](mailto:regulatoryservices@uta.edu) or 817-272-2105.

## Appendix B

### Knowledge of Special Education Law (KSEL) Questionnaire

## Appendix B: Knowledge of Special Education Law (KSEL) Questionnaire

### **Start of Block: Default Question Block**

#### **Q72 Informed Consent for Participation**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

This survey is part of a research project entitled “An Investigation Into School Psychologists’ Knowledge of the Individuals with Disabilities Act, and its Implications for Educational Practice.” The subject matter explores school psychologists’ knowledge of IDEA law at different stages of their career. The primary goal is to determine what improvements can be applied in the education of school psychologists in an area in which they are very frequently engaged. School Psychologists licensed in the State of Texas. Trainees, Interns, Licensed Specialists in School Psychology as well as Licensed Psychologists practicing under the LSSP licensure are all welcome to participate. A panel of experts in the field has validated the survey. These questions are designed to gauge a wide range of knowledge and experience. This study has also received Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Texas at Arlington, and qualified for exemption under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects in accordance with Title 45CFR Part 46.101(b)(2). The survey is confidential, and voluntary. Individual results are completely anonymous and confidential. Participation is voluntary. Discontinuing your participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If there is anything you do not understand, please contact:

##### **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

Christian Rewoldt, M.A., Doctoral Candidate  
Educational Policy and Leadership Studies  
University of Texas at Arlington

##### **FACULTY ADVISOR:**

Lewis M. Wasserman, J.D., Ph.D. Associate Professor,  
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<http://www.uta.edu/coehp/educleadership>

##### **PURPOSE**

Examine the level of legal literacy of school psychologists in training, identify the current status of professional development in the field, and share the implications for professional practice. This information will be valuable for identifying the adequacy of current knowledge and training needs. This data will benefit practitioners, trainers, administrators, and legal professionals. The proposed study also intends to contribute to the knowledge base to improve practice and awareness of practitioners, professional boards of certification, and graduate program personnel.

##### **DURATION:**

The survey itself is designed to take no more than 30 minutes to complete. It is expected most participants will complete the survey within an average of 20 minutes.

##### **PROCEDURES:**

The procedures required by the research subject include: 1. Review and provide electronic signature of the informed consent to participate before proceeding to the survey. 2. Anonymous background information regarding years of experience, amount of supervision,



training, education, interest, professional activities, and sources of information. 3. A series of 62 true-false questions regarding knowledge of IDEA eligibility.

**POSSIBLE BENEFITS:**

Recommendations for further research, policy, practice recommendations, and theoretical implications will be derived. Policy makers and administrators will be empowered with additional knowledge for design of improved systems to serve schools and students.

**POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:**

There is always risk that the information may be compromised, but the researcher will make every effort to minimize this possibility by securing survey materials and ensuring published results do not compromise the identity of participants. Results for specific participants will not be shared with third parties, nor published in the final report. Participants may discontinue any or all procedures at any time at no consequence should they experience any discomfort.

**COMPENSATION:**

There are no direct benefits to subjects for completing this survey.

**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and subjects are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to decline participation in any or all study procedures or quit at any time at no consequence.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Every attempt will be made to ensure study results are kept confidential. All data collected from this study will be stored in the confidential records section of the Educational Policy and Leadership Studies Department at the University of Texas for at least three (3) years after the conclusion of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming subjects. Additional research studies could evolve from the information provided, but participant information will not be linked in anyway; it will remain anonymous. Although rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA Institutional Review Board (IRB), and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. These records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above. The IRB at UTA has reviewed and approved this study and the information within the consent form. If in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review research records, the University of Texas at Arlington will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law.

**CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS**

Questions about this research study may be directed to the researcher, Christian W. Rewoldt, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS) at the University of Texas at Arlington. The email contact for Mr. Rewoldt is christian.rewoldt@mavs.uta.edu, and cellular phone number is (817) 505-5737. Mr. Rewoldt is supervised by Dr. Lewis Wasserman, Associate Professor, ELPS, who can be contacted at lmwasser@uta.edu, or (817) 272-3105. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject or a research-related injury may be directed to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services at 817-272-2105 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

**CONSENT**

By clicking “ACCEPT” below, you confirm that you are 18 years of age or older and have read or had this document read to you. You have been informed about this study’s purpose,

procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you may print a copy of this form using the “Print” function in your browser. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you make a decision regarding your participation, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By clicking “ACCEPT” below, you are not waiving any of your legal rights. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- ACCEPT; I voluntarily agree to participate in this study (1)  
DECLINE; I do not wish to participate in this study (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Informed Consent for Participation INTRODUCTION This survey is part of a research... = DECLINE; I do not wish to participate in this study*

**Q1** 1. How long have you been employed as a school psychologist?

- First year of service (1)  
Second year of service (2)  
Now in an internship, or certified, but have not yet served as a school psychologist (3)  
More than two, but less than ten years (4)  
10-20 years (5)  
Over 20 years (6)

**Q2** What percent of your work time do you spend supervising other school psychologists in the provision of psychological services, excluding administrative supervision? If you are now in an internship, or are certified, but are not yet serving as a paid school psychologist answer “0%.”

- 0% (1)  
Under 25% (2)  
26-50% (3)  
51% or more (4)

**Q3** *Approximately how many hours of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) law training did you receive before you were a licensed school psychologist? Note: A three credit graduate IDEA law course would equal about 42 hours [3hours x 14 classes=42 hours]. Two classes focused only on IDEA law would equal about 6 hours, etc. Include graduate school training, as well as other sources such as professional conferences.*

- Under 5 (1)  
6-21 (2)  
22-50 (3)  
50 or more (4)

**Q4** *Approximately how many hours of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) law training have you received after you were licensed as a school psychologist? Note: You may wish to combine in-service on-the-job and conference training. For example, if you received 10*

hours of in-service IDEA law training and 8 hours of IDEA law training at conferences your total would be 18 hours.

- 10 or less (1)
- 10-24 (2)
- 24-50 (3)
- 50 or more (4)

**Q5** What statement best represents your level of interest in learning more about IDEA and other aspects of special education law?

- No interest (1)
- Little interest (2)
- Some interest (3)
- Much interest (4)

**Q6** Indicate your level of legal *knowledge* as it pertains to IDEA law.

- None (1)
  - Inadequate (2)
  - Adequate (3)
  - Proficient (4)
-

**Q7** What is the percent of your work time as a paid school psychologist that you spend in each of the following activities?

- Initial and reevaluations for eligibility: \_\_\_\_\_ (1)
- IEP development and related meetings: \_\_\_\_\_ (2)
- Team participation in response to Intervention: \_\_\_\_\_ (3)
- Student consultation - special education: \_\_\_\_\_ (4)
- Student consultation - general education: \_\_\_\_\_ (5)
- Systems consultation: \_\_\_\_\_ (6)
- Special education program management and development: \_\_\_\_\_ (7)
- General education systems, program development: \_\_\_\_\_ (8)
- Counseling as a related service: \_\_\_\_\_ (9)
- Administrative duties: \_\_\_\_\_ (10)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (11)
- Total: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q8** To what source(s) do you attribute your knowledge about IDEA?:

	None (1)	Minimal (2)	Moderate (3)	Substantial (4)
An employee association which represents you (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A university education program taken before you entered the workplace (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In-services/professional development courses while employed as a school psychologist (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other school psychologists and educators, such as counselors (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administrators (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The media (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents or their representatives, including lawyers (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Print (professional journals, books) (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional conferences (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-line sources (courses, webinars, etc.) (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other sources (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q9** What is your highest level of education attained?

- Master's Degree (1)
- Sp. (2)
- Psy.D. (3)
- Ed.D. (4)
- Ph.D. (5)

**Each of the following true-false questions pertains to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”). Indicate a statement is “true” when it is more likely to be true than false. Conversely, indicate the statement is “false” when it is more likely to be false than true. When the word “may” appears in the questions it means “legally may.”**

**Q10** A student may qualify for special education and related services under the IDEA if s/he meets the definition of one or more of the categories of disabilities specifically listed in the IDEA and, *where a state or local district so elects*, by meeting the criteria for developmental delays.

- Definitely true (1)
- Probably true (2)
- Neither true nor false (3)
- Probably false (4)
- Definitely false (5)

**Q11** Even where a student has a disability listed in the IDEA, *it still must be shown* that the student needs special education and related services as a result of the student’s particular disability or disabilities, in order for the student to be IDEA eligible.

- True (1)
- False (2)

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**Q12** Once a disability is established the eligibility team *then* determines whether the student requires special education and related services.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q14** Under the IDEA, a student needs special education and related services when the student *requires* those services in order to maximize his/her performance in his/her educational program.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q15** States *must* use the category “*developmental delays*” for younger children [delays in physical development; cognitive, communication, social, or emotional development; and adaptive development] among the IDEA eligibility options.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q16** In order for a child to be IDEA eligible that child *must* fit the definition of one or more of the disabilities listed in the IDEA law.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q17** A student who requires related services, but does not require special education is not a “student with a disability” under the IDEA, unless “related services” are considered “special education” under state standards.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q18** IDEA requires that a medical professional determine that a child is a student with a disability before the student is declared IDEA eligible.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q19** Under IDEA some disabled children are so severely disabled they are disqualified from eligibility since they cannot benefit from any education.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q20** A student with a severe physical impairment who performs at age-level expectancy in general education classroom is *per se* ineligible for services under the IDEA.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q21** When a student’s academic or social struggles are the result of substance abuse *alone*, the student is not eligible as a student with an IDEA disability.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q22** Students with asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity automatically qualify as IDEA eligible under the classification “other health impairment.”

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q23** The list of chronic or acute health conditions included in IDEA’s definition of “other health impairment” is not exhaustive, that is, other health conditions not listed may lead to an IDEA classification of “other health impairment.”

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q24** A student diagnosed by a neurologist as having “attention deficit disorder” who does not suffer from “limited strength, vitality, or alertness” is IDEA eligible as “other health impaired” because of his/her medical condition.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q25** Students who have AIDS or are HIV-positive *may or may not* be IDEA eligible as “other health impaired.”

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q26** When a student’s speech impairment does not interfere with his or her ability to communicate with teachers and peers he will not be eligible for IDEA classification as a “speech and language impaired student.”

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q27** A student with a speech impairment, who passes all of his or her courses and advances from grade to grade, is ineligible for special education and related services under the IDEA category “speech and language impairment.”

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q28** A student with ADHD that adversely affects his or her educational performance must be classified under the “other health impairment” category.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q29** A student who requires educational accommodations for his or her disability is IDEA eligible even where he does not need specialized instruction designed to meet the student’s unique learning needs.

- True (1)
- False (2)



**Q30** A student who is overly alert to his environment (“heightened alertness”) as a result of his or her having ADD may be considered to have “limited alertness” for purposes of eligibility as “other health impaired,” under the IDEA.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q31** For a student to be classified as *emotionally disturbed* under the IDEA s/he must have *more than one* of the following characteristics: (1) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers; (3) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (4) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and (5) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. 34 CFR 300.8©(4).

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q32** In order for a student to have an IDEA “emotional disturbance” the characteristic(s) must be exhibited for “a long period of time,” generally considered to be at least 10 to 12 months, assuming preliminary interventions have been implemented and proven ineffective during that period.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q33** Under IDEA the phrase “to a marked degree” used in connection with defining emotional disturbance means only the *intensity* of the student’s emotionally disturbed behavior in comparison to the behavior of his or her peers.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q34** Where a teenage student’s drug use is the cause of the students’ poor academic performance and not the result of one of the five characteristics listed above, that student may still be classified as “emotionally disturbed” under the IDEA.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q35** A student who is making normal academic progress in his or her educational program without special education services is not “emotionally disturbed” under the IDEA even if he/she has a serious mental illness resulting in dangerous behavior off campus or the need for institutionalization.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q36** A diagnosis of “social maladjustment,” generally defined as “a persistent pattern of conduct in which the basic rights of others and other age-appropriate societal norms are violated” is insufficient to satisfy IDEA criteria for “emotional disturbance,” even when it adversely affects a student’s educational performance.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q37** Once a parent demonstrates that her child is a student with “autism” the student is always entitled to receive special education and related services from the school district under the IDEA.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q38** A state’s age range for IDEA-eligible students may be *greater* than the age range for providing a free public education for non-IDEA students.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q39** Under IDEA, a student’s eligibility for special education and related services terminates when he graduates from high school with a regular high school diploma.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q40** States must ensure that high school students 14 through 17 years of age receive special education and related services where the student was identified as having an IDEA disability *before* his or her incarceration in an adult correctional facility even though that student did not have an IEP in his or her last educational placement *prior to* incarceration.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q41** If a student has been awarded compensatory education as the result of due process for denial of services during high school, he or she is entitled to receive that education even though he has been awarded a regular high school.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q42** A school district may terminate provision of special education and related services to a student with severe intellectual deficits where the district awards the student an IEP diploma even though that student has not aged-out under applicable state law.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q43** Where a secondary student with an IDEA disability repeatedly fails to cooperate with the school in trying to implement his IEP, this may relieve the district of its obligation to provide a FAPE to that student.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q44** When a parent makes a request for an *initial* evaluation for IDEA eligibility the school district has discretion as to whether it will conduct such evaluation.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q45** A school district must provide parents with school psychologists' test protocols used to evaluate students under IDEA where the protocols contain personally identifiable information concerning the student.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q46** States may prohibit local school districts from using a response to intervention model ("RTI") in making eligibility determinations under IDEA's specific learning disability ("SLD") classification.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q47** States may not require local districts to use a “severe discrepancy” model for determining whether a student has a specific learning disability (SLD).

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q48** The term RTI is associated with a student’s response to “scientific, research based” treatments to improve student’s academic performance measured by the discrepancy between the student’s academic achievement and intellectual ability.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q49** Where RTI is properly employed it exempts local districts from the IDEA obligation to assess the student in all areas of suspected disability.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q50** Once a student is determined to have a SLD under RTI, that determination replaces the need for a comprehensive evaluation under IDEA.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q51** Local school districts may adopt *permissive* RTI policies whereby individual buildings located in the district may decide whether to employ RTI assessment procedures or use other procedures instead.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q52** RTI is based on the concept of progressively more intense instructional service delivery where the student fails to progress at the previous level.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q53** RTI is based on uniform U.S. Department of Education assessment standards.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q54** RTIs are implemented under U.S. Department of Education established time lines to ensure uniform nation-wide standards.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q55** If a student does not achieve adequately for his age or meet state-approved grade-level standards in *oral expression or listening comprehension* he may be classified as having a specific learning disability, assuming he meets other IDEA criteria for that classification.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q56** If a student does not achieve adequately for his age or meet state-approved grade-level standards in basic reading skills *or* reading fluency skills *or* reading comprehension, he may be classified as having a specific learning disability, assuming he meets other IDEA criteria for that classification.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q57** If a student does not achieve adequately for his age or meet state-approved grade-level standards in mathematics calculation *or* mathematics problem solving, he may be classified as having a specific learning disability, assuming he meets other IDEA criteria for that classification.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q58** If a student does not achieve adequately for his age *or* meet state-approved grade-level standards in written expression, he may be classified as having a specific learning disability, assuming he meets other IDEA criteria for that classification.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q59** A core principle of RTI is the assessment of a student's progress as a result of the educational intervention.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q60** In determining that a student has a specific learning disability, the eligibility team must affirmatively conclude that the student's underachievement was not primarily the result of a visual, hearing or motor disability.

True (1)  
False (2)

**Q61** In determining that a student has a specific learning disability the eligibility team must affirmatively conclude that the student's underachievement was not primarily the result of an intellectual disability.

True (1)  
False (2)

**Q62** In determining that a student has a specific learning disability the eligibility team must affirmatively conclude that the student's underachievement was not primarily the result of an emotional disturbance.

True (1)  
False (2)

**Q63** In determining that a student has a specific learning disability the eligibility team must affirmatively conclude that the student's underachievement was not primarily the result of cultural *or* environmental *or* economic disadvantage.

True (1)  
False (2)

**Q64** In determining that a student has a specific learning disability the eligibility team must affirmatively conclude that the student's underachievement was not primarily the result of limited English proficiency.

True (1)  
False (2)

**Q65** In determining that a student has a specific learning disability the eligibility team must affirmatively conclude that the student's underachievement cannot be attributed to a lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math.

True (1)  
False (2)

**Q66** Where an eligibility team member does not concur in the conclusions of the team about a student's SLD eligibility that team member *must submit a separate statement* concerning that conclusion.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q67** The eligibility team making a determination as to a student's classification as SLD must submit *a written report*, which includes the criteria it used in coming to its conclusions.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q68 Omitted**

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q69** The *60 calendar day* time constraint for completing an IDEA eligibility evaluation does not apply where a district uses RTI assessments since the RTI evaluation process inherently takes much longer than 60 days following parental consent to evaluate the child.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q70** Under IDEA an *eligibility team member* must conduct the classroom observation required for a SLD determination.

- True (1)
- False (2)

**Q13** Ultimately, it is the school principal who has authority to determine a child's eligibility for receiving special education and related services.

- True (1)
- False (2)

End of Block: Default Question Block

## Appendix C

### NASP Approved Programs in Texas



Appendix C – NASP Approved Programs in Texas (12 programs)

Abilene Christian University, Program website: <http://www.acu.edu/academics/graduate/college-of-arts-and-sciences/psychology-department/school-psychology.html>

Baylor University, Program website: <https://www.baylor.edu/soe/EDP/index.php?id=934930>

Sam Houston State University, Program website: <http://www.shsu.edu/academics/psychology-and-philosophy/psychology/graduate-programs/school-psychology/index.html>

Stephen F. Austin State University, Program website:

<http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/97.asp>

Texas A&M University, Program website: <http://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/colleges-schools-interdisciplinary/education-human-development/educational-psychology/>

Texas A&M University-Commerce, Program website:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/colleges/educationHumanServices/psychologySpecialEducation/Psychology%20Programs/School%20Psychology.aspx>

Texas State University- San Marcos, Program website:

<http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/programs/ssp.html>

Texas Woman's University, Program website: <https://twu.edu/media/documents/psych-phil/DoctoralStudentHandbook2017-18ADA.pdf>

Trinity University,

Program website: <https://new.trinity.edu/academics/departments/education/master-arts-school-psychology>

University of Houston-Clear Lake, Program website: <https://www.uhcl.edu/human-sciences-humanities/departments/clinical-health-applied-sciences/school-psychology/>

University of Houston, Program website: <http://www.uh.edu/education/degree-programs/school-psyc-phd/>

University of Texas-Austin, Program website:

<https://education.utexas.edu/departments/educational-psychology/graduate-programs/school-psychology>

Appendix D

Recruiting Cover Letter

## Appendix D – Recruiting Cover Letter

XX XX, 201X

Survey Distribution Request for:

*Program Director  
University Program*

Greetings,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Texas at Arlington completing a final research project entitled “School Psychologists’ Knowledge of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act”. The subject matter explores school psychologists’ knowledge of IDEA law at different stages of their career. The primary goal is development of recommendations for training and professional development for school psychologists in an area in which they are frequently engaged. An on-line survey has been developed to measure the knowledge of school psychologists licensed in the State of Texas. Trainees, interns, Licensed Specialists in School Psychology and Licensed Psychologists practicing under the LSSP licensure are all welcome to participate. The survey has been validated by a panel of experts in the field. The questions are designed to gauge a wide range of knowledge and experience. The University of Texas at Arlington Institutional Review Board has identified this study as qualified for exemption under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced at Title 45CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

Wide participation will enhance the validity of the results. For this reason, I am requesting distribution to former graduates of school psychology programs in Texas based on email distribution lists. I have attached a recruiting letter that can be included with the request that includes an explanation of the study and direct link to the survey. The informed consent for participation is imbedded in the survey. Individual results are completely anonymous, confidential, and voluntary, but aggregate results will be submitted for publication once the data is analyzed. A more detailed description follows:

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

Christian Rewoldt, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate  
Educational Policy and Leadership Studies  
University of Texas at Arlington  
Box 19575, 701 Planetarium Place  
Arlington, TX 76019-0259

**FACULTY ADVISOR:**

Lewis M. Wasserman, J.D., Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
University of Texas at Arlington  
<http://www.uta.edu/coehp/educleadership>

**PURPOSE:** Examine the legal literacy of school psychologists in training, identify the status of professional development in the field, and share the implications for professional practice. This data will benefit practitioners, trainers, administrators, legal professionals, and provide important information for the benefit of professional boards of certification, and graduate program planners.

**DURATION:** The survey is designed to take no more than 30 minutes to complete. It is expected most participants will complete the survey within an average of 20 minutes.

**PROCEDURES:** The procedures required by the research subject include:

1. Review of the informed consent document and electronic signature prior to completing the survey;
2. Provide anonymous background information regarding years of professional experience, supervision, education, training, and interest in special education law; and
3. Complete 60 true-false questions about education law, professional activities, and sources of professional knowledge and legal aspects of IDEA eligibility.

**POSSIBLE BENEFITS:** Recommendations for research, policy, practice, and theoretical implications will be developed. Policy makers and administrators will be empowered to design and improve education systems.

**POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:** There is always risk information may be compromised, but every effort will be made to minimize this possibility by securing survey materials, and ensuring the published results do not compromise the identity of participants. Results for specific participants will not be shared with third parties, nor published in the final report. Participants may discontinue any or all procedures at any time at no consequence should they experience any discomfort.

**COMPENSATION:** There are no direct benefits to participants for completing this survey.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue involvement at any time without penalty.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Every attempt to ensure study results remain confidential will be made. All data collected from this study will be stored in the confidential records section of the Educational Policy and Leadership Studies Department at the University of Texas for at least three (3) years after the conclusion of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming subjects. Additional research studies could be derived from the information provided, but participant information will not be linked in anyway; it will remain anonymous. Although rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA Institutional Review Board (IRB), and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. These records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above. The IRB at UTA has reviewed and approved this

study and the information within the consent form. If in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review research records, the University of Texas at Arlington will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law.

**CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:** Questions about this research study may be directed to the researcher, Christian W. Rewoldt, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS) at the University of Texas, Arlington. Email contact and phone number are included below. Mr. Rewoldt is supervised by Dr. Lewis Wasserman, Associate Professor, ELPS, who can be contacted at [lmwasser@uta.edu](mailto:lmwasser@uta.edu), or (817) 272-3105. Any questions you have about rights as a research subject or research-related injury may be directed to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services at 817-272-2105 or [regulatoryservices@uta.edu](mailto:regulatoryservices@uta.edu).

Thank you for your assistance and participation in this important study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at:  
[christian.rewoldt@mavs.uta.edu](mailto:christian.rewoldt@mavs.uta.edu) (817) 505-5737 (Cell)

Thank you for your support.

Christian Rewoldt, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate  
Educational Policy and Leadership Studies  
University of Texas at Arlington

Enclosure: Recruiting letter

## Appendix E

### Validation Protocol Analysis Results

Name							Clarity							Represent-iveness	Comments
	M 1	M 2	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	Interrater Agreement	M 1	M 2	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	Interrater Agreement	
Demo-graphic															
1	4	4	4	4		4	1	4	3	4	4		4	1	
2	4	4	4	4		4	1	4	3	4	4		2	0.8	Supervise services rather than psychologists
3	4	2	4	3	4	4	0.83	4	2	4	4		4	0.8	Specify graduate school training
Un-numbered		4	4	4	4	4	1		4	4	4	4	4	1	
4		1	3	4	3	4	0.8	4	1	3	4	3	3	0.83	No options
5		1		4	2	4	0.5		2		4	3	4	0.75	Removed
6	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	3	4	1	
7	4		3	4	4	3	1	4	3	4	4	4	4	1	Add professional conferences
8	3	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	3	4	4	4	4	1	Add Sp & Psy D Degree
True-False															
1	4	4	4	4	4	2	0.83	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
2	4	4	3	4	4	3	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
3	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
4	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
5	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	
6	4	4	3	4	4	3	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
7	3	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
8	4	4	4	4	3	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
9	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
10	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
11	4	2	2	4	3	3	0.66	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	Two separate statements Removed
12	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
13	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
14	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
15	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	

Item Number							Clarity							Represent-iveness	Comments
	M 1	M 2	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	Interrater Agreement	M 1	M 2	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	Interrater Agreement	
16	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
17	4	4	4	4	4	1	0.83	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	
18	4	4	4	4	3	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
19	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
20	3	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
21	2	4	2	4	3	2	0.5	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	Removed
22	4	4		4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
23	3	3	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
24	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
25	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
26	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
27	4	4	4		4	2	0.8	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	
28	4	3	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	
29	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
30	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
31	4	4	2	4	4	2	0.66	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	Removed
32	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
33	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
34	4	4	3	4	4	2	0.83	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	
35	3	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
36	4	4	4	4	4	2	0.83	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	
37	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	3	4	3	1	
38	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
39	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	
40	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
41	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
42	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
43	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
44	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	
45	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
46	4	4	4	4	3	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
47	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
48	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
49	4	1	3	4	4	1	0.66	4	4	4	4	4	2	0.83	Removed
50	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
51	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
52	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
53	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	



Item Number							Clarity							Represent-iveness			Comments
	M 1	M 2	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	Interrater Agreement	M 1	M 2	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	Interrater Agreement			
54	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
55	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
56	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
57	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
58	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
59	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
60	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
61	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
62	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			
63	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	3	4	4	4	1			
64	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	3	4	4	4	1			
65	4	3	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	"Group" or "Team" Member?		
66		4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1			

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## Biographical Information

Christian Rewoldt, originally from Detroit, Michigan, attended public schools in the Boston area, spending much of his time exploring the grounds of the great historical sights and educational institutions. His journey in pursuing a life of academics included enlistment in the United States Army, where he quickly assumed various leadership roles, began his postsecondary education, and earned educational benefits to continue his academic pursuits.

Christian subsequently attended Texas A&M at Kingsville, graduating Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology. Christian was an active member of the Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity, serving as 'Hi Kappa' the chapters' education officer. Christian received recognition as a Distinguished Military Graduate of the Reserve Officers Training Corps, and was commissioned as an active duty officer. Christian earned numerous awards and commendations in a number of executive staff and leadership roles including company commander. After completing his service in the military, Christian attended Texas State University earning a Master of Arts in School Psychology. Christian worked in the public school setting for twenty years prior to earning his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Policy and Leadership from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2018.

His research interests include leadership theory and practice, organization theory, systems consultation, and public education policy. Christian also enjoys music, athletics, travel, the outdoors, and most of all, spending time with his family.