The purpose of this sequential mixed methods study was to investigate special education teachers’ perceptions of preparedness and confidence to implement the 2012 Council for Exceptional Children Initial Special Education Teacher Preparation Standards (2015) and to identify specific types of support and training they need in relation to the standards. Practicing special education teachers located in the Northwest region of the United States were selected through convenience sampling and maximum variation sampling techniques. A web survey was administered to identify special education teachers’ perceptions of preparedness and confidence, or teacher self-efficacy, to implement the standards. In addition, special education teachers were asked to identify primary methods of preparation and training that have prepared them to implement skills and knowledge related to the standards, and to provide suggestions for future training and support. Results gathered from the web-survey were used to inform the development of interview questions and to determine participant selection for interviews. Follow up semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore training and support needs.

Consistent with a sequential mixed methods design, quantitative and qualitative results from this study are elaborated upon and interpreted in sequence and relative to each research question. Meta-inferences are made through the integration of both the quantitative and qualitative results with respect to the research questions. Connections with previous research, limitations, and implications and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

This study fills a critical gap in the literature by providing recent and relevant information related to special education teacher preparedness and confidence in implementing the 2012 Council for Exceptional Children Initial Level Special Educator Preparation Standards (CEC, 2015). Results of the present study lay a foundation for future research related to the design and delivery of effective professional development for special education teachers in school settings and provide a foundation for longitudinal research related to informing the development and revision of special education teacher preparation programs.

Keywords: special education teachers, teacher preparation, teacher self-efficacy, professional development, sequential mixed methods.