

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

5-6-2003

## Personality differences in terms of temperament between teachers of regular education students and teachers of developmentally disabled students

Melissa Masella  
*Rowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Masella, Melissa, "Personality differences in terms of temperament between teachers of regular education students and teachers of developmentally disabled students" (2003). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1342.

<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/1342>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact [graduateresearch@rowan.edu](mailto:graduateresearch@rowan.edu).

PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF TEMPERAMENT BETWEEN  
TEACHERS OF REGULAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AND TEACHERS OF  
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED STUDENTS

By  
Melissa Masella

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the  
Masters of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
May 6, 2003

Approved by

Date Approved 5/6/03

© 2003 Melissa Masella

## ABSTRACT

Melissa Masella

### PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF TEMPERAMENT BETWEEN TEACHERS OF REGULAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AND TEACHERS OF DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED STUDENTS

2002/03

Dr. John Klanderman

Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to identify the components of human personality in terms of temperament that are similar and different between individuals who teach regular education students and individuals who teach special education, specifically in the area of developmental disabilities. This study examined the temperament of these two types of teachers by using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II which is a self-report questionnaire that places individuals into one of four temperament groups: Guardianas, Artisans, Idealists, or Rationals. The sample consisted of 53 teachers, 37 females and 16 males, coming from either a Catholic High School or a private school for developmentally disabled students in southern New Jersey. Results did not support the hypothesis that the teachers of the developmentally disabled students would be classified mostly as Guardians and the teachers of the regular students would show more variability in classification. Both groups of teachers were mostly classified as the temperament group known as Guardians. Implications for further research regarding the differences between these two types of teachers were discussed.

## Table of Contents

Chapter One: The Problem.....	1
Need.....	1
Purpose.....	1-2
Hypothesis.....	2
Theory.....	2-5
Definitions.....	5-6
Assumptions.....	6
Limitations.....	6
Overview.....	7
Chapter Two: Review of Literature.....	8
Instruments.....	8-9
School Organization and Personality.....	9-10
Teacher Autonomy.....	10-11
Personality, Teacher Absenteeism, and Burnout.....	11-12
Sources of Occupational Stress for Teachers.....	12-14
Differences in Personality of Regular Education and Special Ed Teachers...	14-15
Personalities of Outstanding & Exemplary Teachers.....	15-16
Personality of Teachers Involved in Mainstreaming.....	16-17
Personality Factors as a Means of Predicting Success in Teaching.....	17-18
Personality Characteristics of Teachers of Special Needs Students.....	18-19
Summary.....	19-20

Chapter Three: Design of the Study.....	21
Sample.....	21
Measures.....	21-24
Design.....	24-25
Testable Hypothesis.....	25
Analysis.....	25
Summary.....	26
Chapter Four: Analysis of Results.....	27
Description of Actual Sample.....	27
Restatement of Hypothesis.....	27-28
Results.....	28-29
Interpretation of Results.....	29
Summary.....	29-30
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions.....	31
Discussion.....	31-36
Conclusions.....	36-37
Implications for Future Research.....	37-38
References.....	39-41

## List of Charts

Figure 4.1.....	28
-----------------	----

## Chapter One: The Problem

### Need:

This study attempted to contribute to the research on the personality characteristics of teachers by focusing on the differences between teachers of regular education students and those of students with developmental disabilities. The need for this thesis grew from thought regarding why it is that often when one individual tells another individual that he or she works in the area of special education, specifically working with people with developmental disabilities, that the other person will often respond by saying, "you must be a very special person to do what you do." What does this statement mean? What makes people who work with special needs individuals special? Is it a component of their personality? What makes people who choose to teach individuals with disabilities instead of regular education students, or visa versa? These series of questions proposed the need to look at what makes regular education teachers different from special education teachers, specifically in terms of their personalities?

### Purpose:

The purpose of this study was to identify the components of human personality that are similar and different between individuals who teach regular education and individuals who teach special education, specifically in the area of developmental disabilities. This study examined the temperament of teachers by using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter which places individuals in one of the following categories based on

a series of questions: Guardian, Artisan, Rationals, or Idealist. Each one of these categories is broken down into four subtypes which among themselves exhibit distinguishing characteristics.

### Hypothesis:

The hypothesis of this study was that some personality characteristics of regular school teachers differ from those of special education teachers who work with developmentally disabled students. It was hypothesized that teachers of the developmentally disabled are classified mostly as Guardians, whereas teachers of regular education students show more variability in classification according to Keirsey's four categories of temperament. The independent variable in this study was the type of teacher (regular school teacher and special education teacher). The dependent variable was personality or temperament.

### Theory:

The point of temperament is that people are naturally different from each other. People differ from each other in fundamental ways such as in thoughts, feelings, in wants and beliefs, and in what is said and done. Temperament differences are all around us and are not difficult to see. These differences or variations in attitude and action, often trigger a common human response. This response involves seeing differences as strange and even bothersome, because they are different from ourselves. It has been observed that humans often instinctively account for these differences in others in terms of flaw and affliction, instead of as an expression of natural diversity.



The idea of personality and the theory that human beings are born with fundamentally different temperaments or predispositions to certain behaviors is an ancient idea. Temperament theory was first discussed by Hippocrates sometime approximating 370 B.C. A Roman physician named Galen also looked into the idea of temperament in 190 A.D. Many of the same thoughts and basic theoretical ideas continued to be examined in medicine, philosophy, and literature into the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Keirsey, 1998).

The idea that people are born without predispositions and are largely malleable appeared around the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with individuals such as Ivan Pavlov who saw behavior as nothing more than mechanical responses to environmental stimulation. The first American behaviorist, John Watson, agreed with Pavlov's ideas, claiming he could shape a child into any form he wanted through conditioning, provided that the child begins the process as an infant (Keirsey, 1998).

Also around the turn of the century, the idea that people are fundamentally alike in having a single basic motive came into play. The famous Sigmund Freud claimed that all people are driven from within by instinctual lust. Many took issue with Freud's claim, but still retained the notion of a single motivation. At this time, many individuals described what they believed that single motivation was. A Viennese physician named Alfred Adler believed the motivation was strife toward superiority. An American physician, Harry Sullivan claimed social superiority was the basic behavioral motive. The existentialist psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow both focused on the pursuit of self-actualization as the motive. Despite their differences in what single thing

they believed was the main motivation or driving force in behavior, they all believed that human beings had a single fundamental motive (Keirsey,1998).

It was not really until about 1920 that this common belief regarding temperament/behavior was challenged. In 1920 a Swiss physician named Carl Jung wrote a book entitled *Psychological Types*. This book discussed how people are different in essential ways. Jung claimed that people have a multitude of instincts that he called “archetypes” that drive them from within. He claimed that one instinct a person has is no more important than another. Jung believed that it is important to look at natural inclinations toward either “extroversion” or “introversion” combined with preferences for one of what he termed the “four basic psychological functions:” “thinking”, “feeling”, “sensation”, or “intuition.” Jung believed that people could be identified in terms of temperament by these preferences (Keirsey, 1998).

About the same time that Carl Jung did his work, people such as John Stewart Mill and Henry Murray were also studying such things as ethology and personology. However, their books along with Jung’s books basically collected dust on library shelves because Freudian psychodynamics and Pavlovian conditioning largely dominated the field and thought at that time. Jung’s and others ideas of inborn differences in human actions and attitudes was shunned (Keirsey, 1998).

Jung’s ideas were given new life almost by accident around the time of mid-century when Isabel Myers and Kathryn Briggs studied Jung’s *Psychological Types*, and devised a questionnaire for identifying different types of personality. This questionnaire came to be called The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. This questionnaire was inspired by Jung’s book and was designed to identify sixteen pattern of attitudes and actions. At this

time, the interest in personality typology was restored in America, as well as Europe (Keirsey, 1998).

Since that time, breakthroughs in behavioral science came about along with a new found focus on the idea of personality, temperament, and the differences between people. Individuals began to ponder the idea of inborn patterns of attitudes and actions and if it was possible that they determined if people are intelligent and creative in different ways, communicate in different ways, mate, parent, and lead in different ways, and even desire to learn different things, and do different types of work.

These new ideas and focus brought about a new type of appreciation for differences among people. People began to see that much is lost by ignoring these differences. People like Davide Keirsey, talk about how it is important to become acquainted with ones own traits of character for its own benefit, and in order to be able to see others as distinct from oneself. Self-examination questionnaires such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are one way of gaining new insight into ones own temperament/personality and of gaining appreciation for the differences between people and what they have to offer to the dynamic interaction of human beings. These types of instruments are used widely to gain information about preferences in such things as majors in college, and career choice.

### Definitions:

Developmental disabilities- severe, chronic disabilities attributable to mental and/or physical impairment, which manifest before age 22 and are likely to continue indefinitely. They result in substantial limitations in three or more areas: self-care,

receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency, as well as the continuous need for individually planned and coordinated services.

Personality- a dynamic organization, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create the person's characteristic pattern of behavior, thoughts, and feelings.

Temperament- a set of inclinations that we as human beings are born with.

Keirsey Temperament Sorter II- a seventy item questionnaire which classifies individuals into one of four temperament categories: Guardian, Artisan, Rational, or Idealist. These four categories are then further broken down into four subtypes that distinguish them in more detail.

#### Assumptions:

It must be assumed that the subjects each take the Keirsey Temperament Sorter seriously and honestly so an accurate classification is attained for each subject. It must also be assumed that each subject is appropriately placed in the correct temperament category, so that classification is an accurate depiction of the subjects' personality. It must also be assumed that results of the Keirsey Temperament Sorter are valid.

#### Limitations:

The first limitation of this study is that the sample size is small in the number of subjects. The second limitation is that the sample is not an accurate representation of random selection.

### Overview:

In chapter 2, a review of the literature in the areas of personality and temperament in regards to teachers and educators will be discussed. In chapter 3, the design of the study will be examined in terms of its sample, measure, design, testable hypothesis, and analysis. In chapter 4, the results of the study will be analyzed and interpreted in terms of meaning, statistics, and significance. Finally, in chapter 5, the study will be summarized in a discussion and conclusions will be made regarding implications for future research.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The following review of literature examined the field of research in the area of personality as it pertains to various populations of teachers and educators. First, some common instruments used to measure personality characteristics and temperament characteristics were examined, as well as some general research. As the review continues, research that primarily focuses specifically on the personality characteristics of teachers of various types of special needs students was closely examined, as well as a study that uses the Keirsey Temperament Sorter as the primary instrument of measurement.

### Instruments:

An individual's personality is comprised of various dynamic yet consistent groups of characteristics that define unique patterns of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. Since research on the concept of personality surfaced, many instruments have been devised to measure and describe personality. Two such measures are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and The Keirsey Temperament Sorter. The Myers-Briggs Personality test is one of the most widely used personality tests in the country; and evidence of licensure, advanced degrees, or certification is necessary to be able to purchase it (Tucker and Gillespie, 1993). Based on the theory of Carl Jung, the Keirsey Temperament Sorter is modeled on the Myers-Briggs test. This instrument has been described as easier to

administer (Quinn et al.,1992), and is even available on the internet to the general public. Tucker and Gillespie (1993) looked at the correlation between the Myers-Briggs test and the Keirsey Temperament Sorter to investigate if the two instruments were measuring the same constructs. This study found that the two instruments were measuring the same constructs. In a similar study by Quinn et al. (1992), it was found that the Myers-Briggs test and the Keirsey Temperament Sorter correlated significantly at the .001 level.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and The Keirsey Temperament Sorter are just two examples of instruments used to measure personality. Researchers and psychologists use many different instruments to study the personality characteristics of people. Researchers study the personality characteristics of various different populations, for various different reasons.

#### School Organization and Personality:

As mentioned previously, the population to be focused on here is that of teachers. George and Bishop (1971) looked at the interaction between the organizational structure of a school and the personality characteristics of teachers. It was hypothesized that they organizational climate of elementary schools as perceived by teachers was a function of the interaction that occurs between teachers perception of the organization's structural properties and certain personality characteristics of teachers (George and Bishop, 1971). Their findings supported their hypothesis, stating that when the perceived organizational climate and personality characteristics were compatible, a teacher would view that environment as open, healthy, and conducive to authentic interactions. When the two dimensions were not compatible, the teacher would view the environment as closed,

unhealthy, and inhibiting, and would experience more organizational anxiety (George and Bishop, 1971).

Dunleavy (1986) explored the difference between Catholic private school organizations and public school organizations in terms of administrator compliance orientation and teacher personality relationships. The results showed that the public school teachers were higher achievers, more aggressive, more concerned with their reputation and what other people think, did not accept criticism readily, and demonstrated lower self regard than did private school teachers (Dunleavy, 1986). In terms of compliance, the results indicated that the public school organization placed more emphasis on the practice of coercive compliance and less emphasis on the practice of normative compliance to control teacher subordinates than did private school organizations (Dunleavy, 1986).

#### Teacher Autonomy:

The focus of the study by (Pearson, 1995) was to explore the relationship between autonomy and a set of attitudinal and work-related variables. Results showed that teacher autonomy was predicted from the work-related variables of perceived paperwork and job satisfaction, and the attitudinal variables of students and teaching level (Pearson, 1995). The results of this study suggest that autonomous teachers were more satisfied with their profession, perceived a lighter paperwork load, had a more positive attitude toward students, and often taught at the secondary level (Pearson, 1995).

Kreis and Brockopp (2001) also looked at the concept of autonomy with respect to teachers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between



teacher's perceived degree of autonomy, defined as control, influence, participation, and authority, within the work situation, and their sense of job satisfaction (Kreis and Brockopp, 2001). The sample used consisted of both parochial and public school teachers. The results of this study yielded a significant correlation at the .05 level of significance between perceived autonomy inside the classroom and job satisfaction for the total group of teachers (Kreis and Brockopp, 2001). Differences between the parochial teachers and public school teachers were significant in that parochial teachers perceived themselves as more autonomous than public school teachers (Kreis and Brockopp, 2001).

#### Personality, Teacher Absenteeism, and Burnout:

Wayne et al. (1988) looked just at public school teachers in terms of the relative effectiveness of personal characteristics and performance as predictors of short term absenteeism. Wayne et al. (1988) hypothesized that age, the ability to control anxiety and performance ratings would be inversely related to absences. Gender (specifically female), independence, and parental complaints, were hypothesized to be positively related to absenteeism. Results supported the hypothesis. Schoenig (1986) also used public school teachers as the sample population by investigating the relationship among the following three sets of variables believed to contribute to public school teacher burnout: the severity of job stressors; personality hardiness and selected job and personal factors including perceived social support. Results indicated that the greater exposure to stressful events, the more likely the experience of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion; and, the greater the hardiness of personality, the less likely teachers were

to experience burnout. For example, the teachers who were more committed were least likely to experience emotional exhaustion (Schoenig, 1986). Results also showed that the teachers least likely to experience burnout were those who were more committed, worked in an elementary school, were more involved in decision making, had good attendance, and had experienced fewer stressful events on the job (Schoenig, 1986).

Mazur and Lynch (1989) also focused on the concept of teacher burnout by investigating the relationship among the following three variables: principal leadership style, the school organization, and the teacher's personality characteristics. Results of this study indicated that leadership style was not a significant predictor of teacher burnout; that organizational stress factors such as work overload, support, and isolation were significant predictors of teacher burnout, and that personality characteristics such as anomic, personality type A or B, and empathetic self-concept were significant predictors of teacher burnout (Mazur and Lynch, 1989).

#### Sources of Occupational Stress for Teachers:

Similar to the idea of teacher burnout, (Nelson, 2001) focused on the idea of sources of occupational stress for teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). The researcher hypothesized that working conditions and ability to work with externalizing children would affect stress ratings, and tested this hypothesis by examining the relationship between teacher stress levels and demographic characteristics, working conditions, and perceived ability to work with children with emotional behavioral disorders (Nelson, 2001). Nelson (2001) found a statistically significant main effect for working conditions,  $p < .001$ . A post hoc test indicated that teachers of students

with EBD were more likely to support the proposition that they were able to contribute to decisions than those questions focusing on strong working relationships with principal and colleagues (Nelson, 2001). A statistically significant main effect was also found for behavior type,  $p < .001$ . Post hoc analysis indicated that teachers with students with EBD were likely to support the proposition that they had the ability to work with students who exhibit internalizing problem behaviors than those who exhibit externalizing problem behaviors and thought disordered behaviors (Nelson, 2001). Overall, each of the variables had a positive directional influence on the stress levels of the teachers. It was concluded that the more that teachers perceived that they had a strong relationship with the principal, that they were able to contribute to decisions, that they had a good working relationship with their colleagues, and that they were capable of working with children who exhibit externalizing behaviors, the more likely the teachers were to report lower levels of occupational stress (Nelson, 2001).

A similar study by (Trendall, 1989) also examined the affect of stress on teachers. This study included an examination of the contribution of personal, organizational, social factors to the experience of stress and the limits it places on the effectiveness of teachers and the school (Trendall, 1989). Trendall (1989) found that those individuals tending to be most damaged by stressful situations were often those who had no one to fully discuss problems with. Trendall (1989) also found that were most susceptible to the mental and physical effects of stress at mid-life and mid career stages. In terms of effectiveness, (Trendall, 1989) found that an uninspiring physical environment, a lack of personal space, and ineffective organization contribute to reduced effectiveness of both teachers and the school.

Mefferd (1984) also looked at teacher stress and effectiveness; however, he also looked at the interaction of teacher/student personality matches. This study examined 219 students in grade 10 and 27 of their teachers. They were divided into four groups based on emotional stability and extraversion. Mefferd (1984) found that teachers' ratings of several aspects of students' performance correlated highly with final grades; and that ratings reflected both students' and teachers' personalities.

#### Differences in Personality of Regular Education and Special Education Teachers:

The idea for the study done by (Johnson, 1984) arose from the common belief that since there is a different role between regular and special education teachers, that there must be specific personality traits needed for or associated with each. The researcher in this study asked the following research questions: Can we effectively predict whether one is likely to choose special education vs. regular education as a career? To what extent are such predictions significantly more accurate than chance would suggest? (Johnson, 1984). Johnson (1984) used 98 students in teacher training programs for elementary education or special education as a sample. Results indicated that the following variables taken from The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory(MTAI), The Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB), and The Edwards Personal Preference Schedule(EPPS), were predictive of type of teacher or career selection: interest in speech pathology(SVIB), interest in teaching music(SVIB), change(EPPS), social studies teacher(SVIB), guidance counselor(SVIB), intraception(EPPS), nurturance(EPPS), abasement(EPPS), social service(SVIB), and deference(EPPS). The MTAI scores did not prove to be predictive.

Johnson et al. (1984) also looked at the personality differences between regular education pre-service teachers and special education per-service teachers (specifically teachers of the emotionally impaired), by using to SVIB, EPPS, and the MTAI. Results described the regular education teachers as having an object oriented style, as expressive and aggressive, as having verbal-active interests, as persistent and having a preference for structure, and as assertive (Johnson et al., 1984). The special education teachers in this study were described as having verbal-active interests, being expressive and having helping interests, as active and independent, having reticence, and having a helping, guiding style (Johnson et al., 1984).

Similar to the previous study, Victor (1976) also used teacher trainees as a sample population. In comparing seven different dimensions of teacher attitudes about the educative process and four personality variables, the researcher hypothesized that a positive relationship would exist between the personality variable of dogmatism with the teacher attitude dimension of emotional disengagement (Victor, 1976). It was also hypothesized that a positive relationship would exist between the personality variable of self-disclosure and the teacher attitude dimension of personal adjustment ideology. The results supported the hypothesis.

#### Personalities of Outstanding & Exemplary Teachers:

In a study done by Shaughnessy et al. (1995) the personalities of teachers identified as outstanding by principals were investigated. The researchers hypothesis was that the same traits on which outstanding principals had scored highly would be the traits which principals would select when identifying outstanding teachers who were

subsequently administered the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (Shaughnessy et al., 1995). Results yielded high scores on three factors, emotional maturity, self-sufficiency, and self-control. These results were consistent with some previous research but investigators determined that the principals identification of exemplary teachers was primarily subjective (Shaughnessy et al., 1995).

Similar to the (Shaughnessy et al., 1995), (Olson and Chalmers, 1997) also focused on the effectiveness or exemplary characteristics of teachers. Olson and Chalmers (1997) examined the attitudes and attributes of general education teachers that had been identified as effective inclusionists. After school principals and special education teachers had identified general education teachers who were the most skilled at including students with disabilities in their classrooms, (Olson and Chalmers, 1997) examined the descriptions of the identified teachers and the information obtained from personal interviews conducted with the nominees. Seven themes emerged as a result of this examination: the identified teachers described their own personalities as tolerant, reflective, and flexible, they accepted responsibility for all their students, they described a positive working relationship with special educators, they reported adjusting their expectations for integrated students, they indicated that their primary inclusionary attitude was showing warmth and acceptance in interactions with students, they felt that there was insufficient time available for collaboration, and they expressed reservations about fully including all students (Olson and Chalmers, 1997).

#### Personality of Teachers Involved in Mainstreaming:

A study done by (Scott, 1982) also looked at the personality traits of individuals that would be involved in mainstreaming. The main purpose of this particular study was to attempt to identify traits in which some special education majors vary from regular education majors in hopes of identifying some of the traits that might enable educators to deal with the demands mainstreaming presents (Scott, 1982). Results of this study showed that the two groups of education majors only significantly differed in their need for achievement. The regular education majors had a significantly higher need for achievement (Scott, 1982).

#### Personality Factors as a Means of Predicting Success in Teaching:

McBride et al. (1965) also focused their research on looking at personality factors as a means of predicting success in teaching. McBride et al. (1995) attempted to answer the following questions in their study: Is the MMPI or any of its scales significantly associated with successful teaching? And Can the MMPI or any of its subscales be used in a meaningful way to predict successful teachers? Researchers used special education teachers teaching in a rehabilitation institution for the multi handicapped as their sample. Five of the scales of the MMPI were identified as significantly associated with teaching success in this population; however, the scales could not be used as variables of teaching success with high predictability (McBride et al., 1965).

Goodman and McKinnon (1975) also subscribed to the belief that research is needed on the personality characteristics of effective teachers, primarily teachers of emotionally disturbed children. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the personality characteristics of teachers who choose to teach emotionally disturbed children and the relationship of their personality characteristics to measures of teaching

effectiveness (Goodman and McKinnon, 1975). Significant results indicated that more effective teachers have better than average control of their behavior and emotions, are socially aware, evidence self-respect, and are able to provide the structure and organizational qualities necessary to create an academic environment for emotionally disturbed children (Goodman and McKinnon, 1975).

Walker (2001) and Rosica (1998) not only looked at different teachers in terms of effectiveness, but also in terms of level of certification and special skills. Walker (2001) examined the relationship between teacher personality and National Board Certification, comparing teachers with certification, seeking certification, and not seeking certification. Walker (2001) found that the groups only showed significant differences in terms of reasoning ability. The certified teachers showed greater levels of reasoning skills. Walker (2001) concluded that the process that teachers go through to achieve certification may strengthen their reasoning skills. Rosica (1998) compared teachers of treatment and education program for court-placed students, with teachers of the general population, using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter. Results of the analysis showed that the teachers of the court-placed students differed from the other teachers in that they were more traditional, structured, and motivated by their students.

#### Personality Characteristics of Teachers of Special Needs Students:

Studies by Soldan (1980), Friedman (1990), and Dick (1983) all examined the personality characteristics of teachers of students with behavioral disorders, emotional handicap, and disadvantaged. Soldan (1980) found that teachers of behavior disordered children judged to be effective, tend to have a strong need for dominance, intraception,



affiliation, achievement, and succorance; and tend not to have a strong need for endurance, change, abasement, and aggression. It was also found that these teachers had a strong self-concept, relationship orientation, a balance between introversion and extraversion, an ability to establish authority as a teacher, and patience (Soldan, 1980). Friedman (1990) looked at teachers of the emotionally disturbed and investigated them to determine if they had any personal characteristics in common. Friedman (1990) found that these teachers do have several personal characteristics in common, including, achievement, autonomy, dominance, sensing, judgmental, bold, practical suspicious, and following their self-image. Dick (1983) also examined the characteristics of special needs teachers. After examining teachers of the disadvantaged and handicapped, (Dick, 1983) concluded that these individuals scored significantly lower on scales of responsibility and achievement than their traditional counterparts. It was also found that these teachers of the handicapped tended to be younger, having less teaching experience, having more education, and were more often female, than the traditional counterparts (Dick, 1983).

### Summary:

This review of literature examined the field of research in the area of personality and temperament as it pertains to different populations of teachers and educators. First, some common instruments used to measure personality and temperament were examined, as well as some general research on the topic. As the literature moved on, the research talked about relationship of school organization to teacher personality, teacher autonomy, the relationship of personality to teacher absenteeism and burnout, and sources of occupational stress for teachers. For example, it was noted that specific personality

characteristics can be predictors of things like burnout, stress, job satisfaction, as well as the type of teacher one chooses to be. Likewise, this review also touched on some differences in personality of regular education teachers versus special education teachers, personality characteristics of outstanding and exemplary teachers, personality of teachers involved in mainstreaming, and personality and temperament characteristics of teachers of students with different types of special needs.

### Chapter 3: Design of the Study

#### Sample:

The sample used in this study consisted of approximately 60 teachers. Approximately 30 of those teachers were teachers of regular education students in a Catholic High School in southern New Jersey. The remaining amount of teachers (approximately 30 teachers) were teachers of developmentally disabled students from a school located in southern New Jersey. Teachers were both male and female, and ranging in age from approximately 22-60. Teachers varied in the amount of teaching experience and in areas of specialization.

#### Measures:

The instrument that was used to measure the temperament of the teachers was the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II (KTS-II). The KTS-II is comprised of 70 forced-choice items which use self-examination as a means of getting individuals to ask themselves questions about their preferred attitudes and actions. These preferences are what are combined and analyzed to produce a depiction or profile of temperament. According to Keirsey, scores will place an individual in one of four categories: Artisans, Guardians, Idealists, or Rationals. Each of these categories represents a type of temperament which is unique and can be broken down further into four subtypes.

According to David Keirsey, the following are very brief descriptions of the four categories of temperament. Individuals classified as Artisans are said to always be

probing their immediate surroundings in order to detect and exploit any favorable options that come within reach. It is important for Artisans to have the freedom to act on the spur of the moment, whenever and wherever opportunity arises. In the life of an Artisan, no chance is blown, no opening missed, and no angle overlooked. Artisans check out anything that may turn out to be exciting, pleasurable, or useful. They also make sure that what they do is practical and effective in getting what they want. Isabel Myers described these people as aware of reality, adaptable, artistic, athletic, open-minded, on the outlook for workable compromises, knowing what is going on around them, seeing the needs of the moment, having no use for theories, easygoing, tolerant, unprejudiced, persuasive, gifted with machines and tools, sensitive to color, line, and texture, wanting first hand experiences, and generally enjoying life.

The group of individuals classified as Guardians are described as being observant of their close surroundings with a keen eye in the name of scheduling their own and others' activities so that needs are met and conduct is kept within bounds. According to Guardians, everything should be kept in its proper place, everybody should be doing what they are supposed to, everybody should be getting their just deserts, every action should be closely supervised, all products thoroughly inspected, all legitimate needs promptly met and all approved ventures carefully insured (Kiersey, 1998). Guardians observe schedules and demand that ways and means of getting things done are proper and acceptable. Isabel Myers describes these individuals as conservative, stable, consistent, routinized, sensible, factual, unimpulsive, patient, dependable, hard-working, detailed, painstaking, persevering, and thorough.

Idealists are said to be introspective and friendly to the core in dreaming up how to give meaning and wholeness to peoples' lives. Conflict in those around them is painful for these individuals. They deal with this in a personal way and care deeply about keeping morale high in their membership groups, and about nurturing the positive self-image of their loved ones. It is vitally important to have everyone in their circle feeling good about themselves and getting along. Myers say these individuals as humane, sympathetic, enthusiastic, religious, creative, intuitive, insightful, and subjective.

The last of the four groups are those people classified as Rationals. These individuals require themselves do be persistently and consistently rational in their actions. They insist that they have a rationale for everything they do and that whatever they do and say makes sense. Isabel Myers describes Rationals as analytical, systematic, abstract, theoretical, intellectual, complex, competent, inventive, efficient, exacting, independent, logical, technical, curious, scientific, and research-oriented.

According to David Keirsey and Isabel Myers, these four categories of temperament all represent a distinct picture or pattern of attitude and action. Each is unlike the other in very unique and characteristic ways. The KTS-II is similar to the Myers- Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which is one of the most widely used personality tests in the country. The KTS-II is available in pencil and paper form or online. In contrast to the MBTI, the psychometric data regarding the KTS-II is extremely limited. There is no technical manual and no psychometric information included in *Please Understand Me* or *Please Understand Me II*; the books in which the test's author, David Keirsey explains the purpose for the sorter and the four categories. No estimates of retest reliability of the KTS or KTS-II have been found. Waskel (1995) found alpha

coefficients of the paper version of the KTS-II in the range of .74 to .89 for the four scales, which is evidence of acceptable internal consistency. Kelly and Jugovic (2001) found that the KTS-II has satisfactory concurrent validity. Using the MBTI as the validity criterion, moderate to strong correlations were found between the two measures of psychological type for both male and female participants.

### Design:

Prior to completing the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II, the participants were asked to complete an informed consent form that indicated that they understood that they were choosing to participate in a study about personality and temperament and that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time or to stop participating at any time during the survey. By completing the informed consent form, the participants also indicated that they understood that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous.

After completing the informed consent form, the participants were asked to complete a background information form. This form asked the participant to indicate what sex they are, their age, years of teaching experience, and area of specialization. After background information was completed, the participants were asked to complete the KTS-II. All forms and the KTS-II were administered at faculty meetings and would either be completed at that time or participants were asked to return them directly to the researcher or to the principal or supervisor.

After all forms and surveys were returned to the researcher, they were scored and participants were placed into one of the four categories mentioned above.

As stated previously, the independent variable in this study was the type of teacher (regular education or special education); and, the dependent variable was temperament, specifically the four temperaments identified by the KTS-II (Guardian, Artisan, Idealist, or Rational).

### Testable Hypothesis:

The testable hypothesis of this study was that according to the results of the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II the teachers of the developmentally disabled students would be classified mostly as Guardians; whereas, the classifications of the teachers of the regular education students would be more varied.

The null hypothesis of this study was that there was no difference between the teachers of the regular education students and the teachers of the developmentally disabled students. The alternative hypothesis was that there was a difference between the teachers of the regular education students and the teachers of the developmentally disabled students.

### Analysis:

Analysis of the results of this study was descriptive and non-parametric in nature. Descriptive statistics were used to test the hypothesis, as well as a non-parametric test such as the Mann-Whitney. The .05 level of confidence was acceptable in this study. These types of analyses were appropriate for analyzing the results because the data was nominal in nature. Numeric values or scores were not collected and analyzed.

### Summary:

This study looked at personality differences between regular education teachers and special education teachers of developmentally disabled students, in terms of temperament as assessed by the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II. Approximately 60 teachers were used as the sample, consisting of both males and females from a variety of age groups and having various levels of experience and expertise. Results of the KTS-II placed each participant in one of four temperament categories: Guardian, Artisan, Idealist, or Rational. It was hypothesized that the teachers of the developmentally disabled students would be mostly classified in the Guardian group; whereas, the teachers of the regular education students would exhibit more variety in terms of their classification among the four groups. Results were analyzed with descriptive statistics and a non-parametric analysis.



## Chapter 4: Analysis of Results

### Description of Actual Sample:

The actual sample size included 53 teachers. Twenty seven of those teachers came from the Catholic High School; and, the remaining twenty six were from the school for developmentally disabled students. The teachers ranged in age from 23-74 years of age. They ranged in years of teaching experience from 1-42 years. The sample consisted of 37 females and 16 males. Of those teachers coming from the Catholic High School, 16 were female and 11 were male. The age range in the Catholic High School was from 24-74 years of age. The range of teaching experience was from 1- 42 years. Reported areas of specialty for the Catholic High School teachers included: Mathematics, English, History, Religion, Spanish, Social Studies, Science, Music, Dramatic Arts, and Special Education.

Of those teachers coming from the school for developmentally disabled students, 21 were female and 5 were male. The ages of these teachers ranged from 23-58 years. The range of teaching experience was from 1-28 years. Reported areas of specialty for the teachers of the developmentally disabled students included: Special Education, Health/Physical Education, Art, Science, Music, and Psychology.

### Restatement of Hypotheses:

It was hypothesized that teachers of the developmentally disabled were classified mostly as Guardians, whereas teachers of regular education students showed more

variability in classification according to Keirsey's four categories of temperament. The null hypothesis of this study was that there was no difference between the teachers of the regular education students and the teachers of the developmentally disabled students. The alternative hypothesis was that there was a difference between the teachers of the regular education students and the teachers of the developmentally disabled students.

### Results:

In terms of the number of subjects that were classified as a Guardian according to the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II, 18 out of the 26 teachers of the developmentally disabled students were classified as Guardians; and, 17 out of the 27 teachers of the regular education students at the Catholic High School were classified as Guardians. Of the Catholic school teachers, 5 were classified as Idealists, 4 as Artisans, and 1 as a Rational. Of the teachers of the developmentally disabled students, 7 were classified as Idealists and 1 as an Artisan. Figure 4.1 illustrates these findings. Group 1 are the teachers of the regular education students in the Catholic High School; and, group 2 are the teachers of the developmentally disabled students.

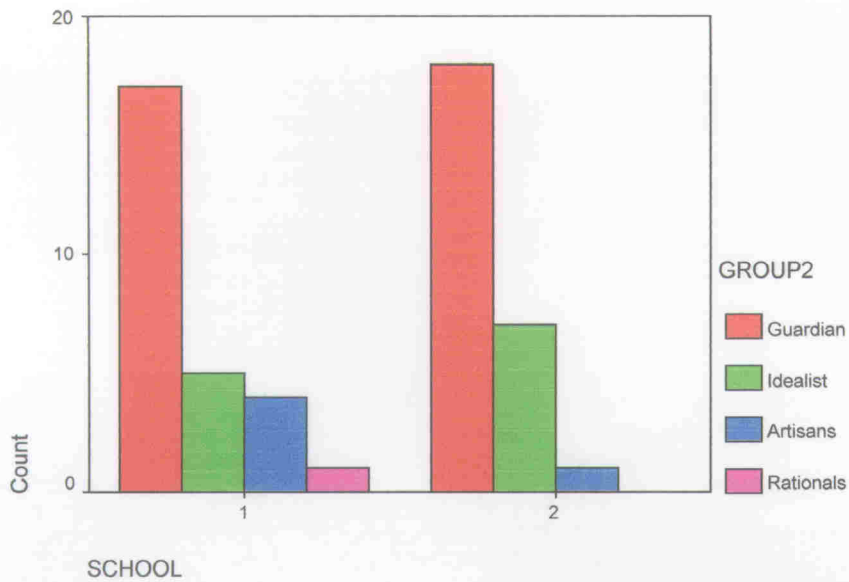


Figure 4.1

### Interpretation of Results:

After examination of the results, it was stated that the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. A Mann-Whitney Test showed that there was no statistical difference between the two groups of teachers.

### Summary:

Even though no this study did not produce any statistically significant results, and no real significant differences was noted; there were some slight differences between the groups as evidenced from the results of the Keirsey Temperament Sorter and the background information obtained. Firstly, overall the teachers of the regular education students in the Catholic High school were older, had more reported teaching experience,

had more reported range in areas of specialty and had more female respondents overall, but had more males respond than in the group of teachers from the school for the developmentally disabled. The teachers from this school , overall, were younger, had less teaching experience, had a more limited range in specialty area.

According to the results of the Keirsey Temperament Sorter, no significant difference was seen in relation to the number of guardians in each group. However, the teachers of the developmentally disabled students were primarily Guardians and Idealists, whereas, the teachers from the Catholic High School were also primarily Guardians and Idealists; but also had more individuals belonging to the Artisan and Rational groups.

## Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

This study attempted to contribute to the research on the personality characteristics of teachers by examining the differences between teachers of regular education students and those of students with developmental disabilities. The teachers from both groups were examined in terms of temperament by using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II, which placed them in one of four main temperament groups: Guardians, Artisans, Idealists, or Rationals. The original hypothesis was that the teachers of the developmentally disabled students would be classified mostly as Guardians; and, the teachers of the regular education students would show more variability in terms of the groups they were placed in. Analysis of results showed no significant difference between the two groups of teachers. The majority of teachers in both groups were classified as Guardians. Therefore, the results failed to reject the null hypothesis. The following discussion and conclusion ties the results back to already existing research and relates what has been found to the original problem, as well as discusses some implications for future research.

### Discussion:

The study of temperament involved looking at how people differ from each other in the way they think and feel, in what they want and believe, and in what they say and

do. These differences have been called variations in attitude and action by people such as Isabel Myers and David Keirsey.

This idea that people are formed at birth with fundamental different temperaments or predispositions is an ancient one dating back to Hippocrates and Galen. Since then, the field or area of personality and temperament has gone through a series of changes. For example, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century hosted the ideas of Ivan Pavlov and John Watson. These individuals believed people were born without predispositions and that behavior was nothing more than mechanical responses to the environment.

Around the turn of the century, individuals such as Sigmund Freud introduced the idea that people are fundamentally alike in having a single basic motive to their behavior. Physicians and others like Freud, Adler, Sullivan, Rogers, and Maslow all argued or had their idea of what that single basic motive was. From instinctual lust to social solidarity, to self-actualization, it was debated regarding what drives humans to behave how they do.

It was around 1920 when this belief regarding a single motive was challenged and forever changed. Carl Jung originally explained his position that people are different in essential ways, having to do with different instincts and natural inclinations toward various types of behavior. Jung paved the way for individuals like Isabel Myers and Kathryn Briggs who as a result of studying Jung's work, devised one of the first questionnaires for identifying different types of personality. Today questionnaires like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Keirsey Temperament Sorter are used all the time as a means of getting people to ask themselves questions about their preferred attitudes

and actions, because these preferences are what combine to produce a profile of temperament.

The body of literature shows that researchers study the personality characteristics and temperament of various populations for various different reasons. The research looked at in the literature review in this study primarily focused on the population known as teachers and educators, and the present study attempted to add to this body of knowledge in some way.

In terms of school organization and personality, (George and Bishop, 1971) and (Dunleavy, 1986), both looked at the interaction between elements of organizational structure in a school and the personality characteristics of teachers. Finding showed such results that when perceived organizational climate and personality characteristics were compatible, teachers viewed their environment as open, healthy, and conducive to authentic interactions. Other results found that in comparing Catholic private school organization and public school organization, public school teachers were higher achievers, more aggressive, more concerned with reputation, did not accept criticism readily and demonstrated lower self regard than private school teachers.

Other studies focused on the idea of teacher autonomy. Pearson (1995) for example found that autonomous teachers were more satisfied with their profession, perceived a lighter paperwork load, had a more positive attitude toward students, and often taught at the secondary level. Kreis and Brockopp (2001) also looked at teacher autonomy, finding that parochial teachers perceived themselves as more autonomous than public school teachers.

Absenteeism and burnout and their relationship to teacher personality was another area of focus in the existing body of literature. Wayne, et al. (1988) for example, found that gender (female), independence, and parental complaints, were all positively related to absenteeism. Other studies like (Schoenig, 1986) examined the subject of teacher burnout. This study found that the greater exposure to stressful events, the more likely a teacher was to experience burnout. Teachers least likely to experience burnout were those who were more committed, worked in an elementary school, were more involved in decision making, and had good attendance.

Studies like (Shaughnessy et al., 1995) looked at the personality characteristics of teachers identified as outstanding; finding that the highest scores of these individuals were in the areas of emotional maturity, self-sufficiency, and self-control. Olson and Chalmers (1997) examined the attitudes and actions of general education teachers identified as effective inclusionists, finding that they all described their own personalities as tolerant, reflective, flexible, and accepting responsibility for all their students.

The area of research that came closer to the focus of this present study was examining the differences in personality between regular and special education teachers. Most of the research in the current body of literature examines teacher trainees or pre-service teachers. For example, (Johnson et al., 1984) compared the personality differences of regular education pre-service teachers and special education pre-service teachers; finding that the regular education pre-service teachers had an object oriented style, were expressive and aggressive, and preferred structure. The special education group were also described as expressive, but also had helping interests, were active, independent, and guiding.



The second area of research that was more directly related to the present study was that of the personality characteristics of teacher of special needs students, such as those with behavioral disorders or emotional disturbances. Soldan (1980) found that teacher of behavior disordered children tend to be effective, have a strong need for dominance, intraception, affiliation, achievement, and succorance; and, tend not to have a strong need for endurance, change, abasement, and aggression. These teachers according to (Soldan, 1980) have as strong self-concept, patience, a balance between introversion and extroversion, and an ability to establish authority as a teacher. Friedman (1990) looked at personality characteristics of teachers of emotionally disturbed children; and, found that these teachers have the following characteristics in common: achievement, autonomy, dominance, sensing, boldness, etc. Dick (1983) also examined the characteristics of special needs teachers; concluding that they tend to be younger, have less teaching experience, have more education, and are more often females than their traditional counterparts.

In reviewing the research on personality or temperament as it relates to teachers, no literature was found that examined teachers of developmentally disabled students. Research was very limited and centered mainly around teachers of the emotionally and behaviorally disturbed individuals. Therefore, this study attempted to add to this body of research and introduce the examination of teachers of students with developmental disabilities who have been defined as those individuals who possess severe, chronic disabilities attributable to mental and/or physical impairment which manifest itself before age 22 and is likely to continue indefinitely. The present finding in this study validated some of the findings that others have previously made; such as the research done by

(Dick, 1983) which also found that teachers of special needs individuals tend to be female, younger, and have less teaching experience than their traditional counterparts. In this study it was found that the teachers of the developmentally disabled students were mostly females, were younger, and had less teaching experience, than those teachers of the regular education students in the Catholic High School.

### Conclusions:

The original problem or need for this research was basically to try examine why it is that teachers who work with disabled students often are labeled as special people by others, and what makes them different from teachers who choose to work with regular education students. The thought was that maybe it was due to specific personality characteristics or a certain temperament type. The study attempted to identify these specific temperament types by using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II which places individuals into one of the four main temperament types: Guardians, Artisans, Idealists, or Rationals.

The original hypothesis that the teachers of the developmentally disabled students would be classified mostly as Guardians; whereas, the regular teachers would exhibit more variability with respect to classification, arose from observation and opinion after reading David Keirsey and Isabel Myer's descriptions of the four temperaments. What is known now after further investigation of these temperaments is that teachers in general are most often classified as Guardians. According to Keirsey, Guardians are concerned with the care of others, the young and old, the impaired and the infirm. Guardians usually fill the ranks of traditional service occupations such as teaching, as service to

others comes quite naturally to them. Keirsey says that Guardians are hard workers and are willing to do the thankless jobs that the other types of temperaments seem content to ignore.

A major limitation to this study was the small sample size, as well as the fact that the sample of teachers used is not an accurate representation of random selection. Being a study based on the results of a questionnaire, those that returned the questionnaire are bound to be different in some respect than those individuals that did not return the questionnaire. If done again, one might choose to look at teachers from a variety of schools for developmentally disabled students and compare them to teachers from a variety of public schools as well as private schools. The fact that the teachers of the developmentally disabled students were compared to teachers of a Catholic High School, may have also confounded results in some way.

#### Implications for Future Research:

The results of this study introduce the idea or prospect of examining the personality characteristics of many different types of teachers. This study might show that there is a need to further examine teachers who work with students with severe disabilities and individuals who make up a small proportion of the population and are often forgotten about by the general public. The results of this study do not adequately answer the question of what makes teachers of students such as those with developmentally disabilities, different from those teachers who choose to teach children without disabilities. Future research might look at these teachers and examine their personality characteristics and temperament using different types of instruments, not only

questionnaires. It might be appropriate simply to interview many teachers and ask them why it is that they made the decision to teach the type of students they do, as well as what they think are the characteristics that set apart those who choose to work with disabled people as opposed to those who choose not to.

## References

- Bishop, L.K. and George, J.R. (1971). Relationship of organizational structure and teacher personality characteristics to organizational climate. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16(4), 467-475.
- Dick, K.L. (1983) An examination of personality traits of successful teachers of the disadvantaged and handicapped. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1984). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 44, 2455.
- Dunleavy, R.A. (1986). Compliance patterns and teachers personalities in private and public school organizations in west virginia. (Doctoral Dissertation, West Virginia University, 1987). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 47, 2818.
- Friedman, M.V. (1990) Personal characteristics of eight elementary teachers of emotionally handicapped children: a multiple-case study. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida, 1991). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 52, 131.
- Goodman, G. and McKinnon, A.J. (1975). Personality characteristics of student teachers of the emotionally disturbed. *Journal of SPATE*, 107-114.
- Johnson, W.A. (1984). Non-intellectual factors useful for predicting career selection between regular class and special class pre-service teachers. *College Student Journal*, 18(3), 273-279.
- Johnson, et al. (1984). Multivariate methods useful for distinguishing attitudinal and personality characteristics of special education and regular elementary pre-service trainees. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 17(2), 43-50.
- Keirsey, D. (1998). *Please understand me II*. Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis Book Company.
- Kelly, K.R. and Jugovic, H. (2001). Concurrent validity of the online version of the Keirsey temperament sorter II. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 9(1), 49-59.
- Kreis, K. and Brockopp, D.Y. (2001). Autonomy: a component of teacher job satisfaction. *Education*, 107 (1), 110-115.
- Mazur, P.J. and Lynch, M.D. (1989). Differential impact of administrative, organizational, and personality factors on teacher burnout. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 5(4), 337-353.

- McBride, et al. (1965). Personality factors in the success of classroom teachers of the multihandicapped. *Cerebral Palsy Journal*, 26(3), 3-5.
- Mefferd, R.B. (1984). Performance assessment and personalities of teachers and students. *Psychological Reports*, 54, 317-318.
- Nelson, J.R. (2001). Sources of occupational stress for teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*.
- Olson, M.R. and Chalmers, L. (1997). Attitudes and attributes of general ed. teachers identified as effective inclusionists. *Remedial & Special Education*, 18(1), 28.
- Pearson, L.C. (1995). The prediction of teacher autonomy from a set of work-related and attitudinal variables. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 28(2), 79-84.
- Quinn, et al. (1992). A cross-correlation of the myers-briggs and keirsey instruments. *Journal of College Student Development*, 33, 279-280.
- Rosica, B.A. (1998). The relationship of teacher retention to personality style at vision quest national limited. (Doctoral Dissertation, Andrews University, 1998). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59, 1533.
- Schoenig, T.M. (1986). An investigation of the relationships among burnout, hardiness, stressful teaching events, job and personal characteristics in public school teachers. (Doctoral Dissertation, Hofstra University, 1987). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 47, 4334.
- Scott, M. (1982). Identification of some teacher traits needed by teachers for mainstreaming. *College Student Journal*, 16(3),
- Shaughnessy, et al. (1995). Personality characteristics of outstanding teachers. *Psychological Reports*, 76, 1035-1038.
- Soldan, P.W. (1980). Personality characteristics of teachers of behavior disordered children. *Behavioral Disorders*, 6(1), 59-61.
- Trendall, C. (1989). Stress in teaching and teacher effectiveness: a study of teachers across mainstream and special education. *Educational Research*, 31(1), 52-58.
- Tucker, I.F. and Gillespie, B.V. (1993). Correlations among three measures of personality type. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 77, 650.
- Victor, J.B. (1976). Relationship between teacher belief and teacher personality in

four samples of teacher trainees. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 45(1), 4-9.

Walker, S.A. (2001). An investigation of the relationship between teacher personality and national board certification among south mississippi teachers. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 2002). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62, 2391.

Waskel, S.A. (1995). Temperament types: midlife death concerns, demographics, and intensity of crisis. *The Journal of Psychology*, 129, 221-233.

Wayne, et al. (1998). Personal characteristics of job performance and absenteeism of public school teachers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 18(7), 552-563.