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Special Education Teacher Perceptions of the Characteristics of a
Satisfactory Working Environment

by

David John McCauley

This Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Education

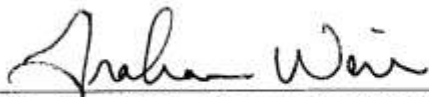
School of Education

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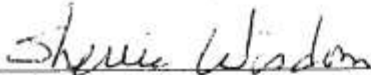
A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University
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At Lindenwood University by the School of Education



Dr. Graham Weir, Dissertation Chair

5-15-15

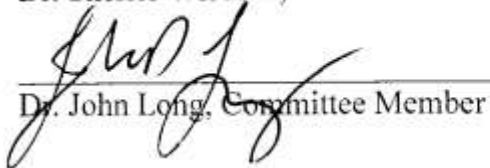
Date



Dr. Sherrie Wisdom, Committee Member

5-15-15

Date



Dr. John Long, Committee Member

5.15.15

Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: David John McCauley

Signature: David John McCauley Date: 5/15/15

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my wife and best friend, Paula, who has always supported my endeavors since we first met in 1981. She supported me during my law enforcement career, which was in addition to a career in the U.S. Naval and Air Force Reserves. She has always been there when I needed advice on something. I need to thank my sons James and Ian for supporting my goals in life. Furthermore, I need to thank all of my family for supporting me and understanding why I had to miss those family gatherings due to my work, reserve, or academic obligations.

I started working on this research in 2010; now it is 2015, and it is finally ending. I need to thank Dr. Weir, Dr. Wisdom, and Dr. Long for their support during this process. I especially need to thank Dr. Weir for understanding my need to take nearly a year off to move to Florida to care for my younger brother, who was in a near fatal motorcycle accident in June 2012. It goes without saying that my priorities changed with this family tragedy, and upon my return to Saint Charles, MO, I had a lot of work to do to complete this project. Dr. Weir consistently found time to help with editing my paper. Now, as I reach the culmination of this project, Dr. Wisdom has been editing the statistical portion of the paper to insure accuracy. Additionally, I need to thank Dr. Long for taking the time to read and provide input for the project.

I now live in Southern Florida after my wife took a transfer with her employer to the Miami area. I am now closer to my brother to check in on him. With this came the necessity of conversing with members of my dissertation committee via e-mail. It is greatly appreciated that these professionals understood how my life changed in the last couple of years and that they continued their support.

Abstract

The special education teacher is a part of any school district and with the position comes responsibility for the teacher, building administrators, and district administrators. These school district personnel must work together to create a safe environment for all students to be successful.

In 1983, the U.S. Department of Education's report, *A Nation at Risk*, brought attention to the issue of retention of schoolteachers, especially those that worked with special needs students. While working as a special educator, the researcher overheard many teachers express concern about poor working conditions within their respective school districts. They expressed a lack of adequate support from building and district administrators, parents, and general education teachers. They expressed inadequate time to complete required paperwork. The researcher worked for both school districts that participated in this research project; therefore when asked, the district superintendents granted permission to conduct research within the school districts.

The literature review supported the claims stated by special education teachers. When reviewing the literature, the researcher decided to add specifics on how society viewed those individuals who did not act or appear to be normal in society. There is history dating back to 10,000 B.C.E. about those with special needs. There were some very influential names and universities involved in reports of researching ways to prevent those with special needs from pro-creating. Furthermore, there were laws created that prohibited those with limited intelligence from immigrating to the United States.

This research involved utilizing a free, on-line survey program. The researcher invited only active special education teachers from the two participating school districts

to participate in the survey. The questions related to perceptions of administrator support, working conditions, and mentoring. The researcher included mentoring because it was a requirement for new teachers in Missouri. The literature suggested that new teachers left the profession early in their careers due to mentoring issues.

This research study produced mixed results. The results indicated a concern regarding mentoring of new teachers. The responses from the participants suggested that there were still concerns, over thirty years after *A Nation at Risk*, about administrative support, working conditions, and mentoring.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Background of the Study

The United States Department of Education's (1983) publication of the report *A Nation at Risk* identified the retention of certified teachers, especially those teaching children of special needs, as a problem (Cooley-Nichols, Bicard, Bicard, & Casey, 2008; Shanley, 1998). The mandates imposed at the time by federal standards in the servicing of special education children compounded the problem. These federal guidelines insured that children received a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE), regardless of their specific disabilities (Friend, 2005). The parents of these special needs students expected their sons and daughters to be taught in the same classrooms as their peers, with the necessary accommodations to the curriculum to help ensure they were academically successful. In addition, in 2001 the federal government enacted the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which mandated that all students be proficient in math and reading by 2014 and held schools accountable for this mandate (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2010). Furthermore, NCLB of 2002 mandated that all classrooms be staffed by highly qualified teachers (HQT) by the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year (Friend, 2005). This meant if the special educator taught math, then he or she needed to be dual certified in math and special education to meet the HQT standard. The special educator was not only an educator, but was responsible for the implementation of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), modifications to the course outline, and quarterly progress reports to parents. Additionally, he or she planned IEP meetings on an annual basis, re-evaluations every three years to ensure proper placement or continued qualification to

remain in special education classes, supervision of assigned paraprofessionals, and insured that students completed their homework and other assignments (Friend, 2005).

The special educator, as well as the general educator, needed to be flexible and able to structure his or her teaching style to use research strategies to support of NCLB requirements effectively. The special needs students may have possessed different reading levels, math levels, behavioral issues or disabilities, which required different methods of presenting the material (Cramer, Nevin, Thousand, & Liston, 2006).

Special educators could have on their caseload any number of students they saw one time a day in a resource room, or maybe only once a week in a short meeting to check progress. The number of students assigned to a special education teacher's caseload could have a significant effect on that teacher's performance in the classroom (McLeskey, 2003). The students were placed in the least restrictive environment, therefore, they were in the general education classes and not readily accessible to the case manager. If this was the case, then the case manager needed to depend on the general educator for accurate information on the progress of the student(s) assigned to his or her particular class.

The problem of special educator retention, or personnel turnover, drew the attention of administrators and government officials to the point that it was recognized as a serious problem. In 2004-2005, the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) was administered to 3,214,900 teachers nationwide (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2004, p. 8). The SASS was a system of related questionnaires, which provided descriptive data on the context of education matters. The questionnaires ranged from teacher demand, teacher and principal characteristics, general conditions of schools,

teachers' and principals' perceptions of school climate, and problems with schools, to include compensation (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2007a). The largest percentage of teachers who indicated they left the teaching profession fell in the 'other' category at 10.7% and could have included some special education teachers. The second largest category of teachers who left the profession was special educators at 10%. This amounted to approximately 41,300 special education teachers nationally that left the profession. There were an additional 45,900 (or 11.1% of the teaching population) who transferred to another school district or out of the classroom, but stayed in the education profession (NCES, 2004, p. 8). This amounted to 21.1% special educators who either left the profession or transferred to another position in the education field (USDOE, 2007b). These statistics were alarming and demonstrated the need for action to reduce the number of teachers who leave the profession.

Rationale

This choice of topic for study was based on my personal experiences in the classroom. While working as a substitute teacher at all different grade levels, I heard fellow teachers complaining about their working conditions. They complained about lack of time to complete paperwork, lack of support by administrators, and their working environment. As a substitute teacher, I did not see this; therefore, I was interested in seeing if these were actual problems, as I was interested in working with special needs students.

Although I heard experienced teachers complain about lack of support, excessive paperwork, or poor working conditions, it did not deter my goals of working with students with special needs. My first year as a special education teacher was in a rural

high school, and I had nearly 20 students on my caseload. A caseload is the number of special needs students assigned to a specific special educator during the school year (MODESE, 2014a). During this first year, I had two mentors, one of whom decided she was too stressed with the combination of IEP paperwork and assisting me during my first year as a special educator with the district. The second mentor I had within the district was located in another building, and when I had questions, I had to leave the building to get them answered. In addition, I worked in a room that measured about 12 feet by 12 feet. At any given time, I had six to 10 students, plus a paraprofessional who assisted me in the classroom. The room was very crowded, and I had to share my textbooks with a teacher in another classroom, which made it difficult to assign homework. My first year as a special education teacher was not pleasant, but it did not deter from my goal of working with special needs students.

In my second year as a special education teacher, I worked in another high school located on the north side of Saint Louis County. This high school enrollment consisted of approximately 85% African-American students. The special education teachers assigned to this high school, or any school within the school district came from the Special School District of Saint Louis County (SSD). When the Special School District hired me, they considered me an experienced special education teacher and did not assign me a mentor. I did have someone to answer the questions that I had, but she also covered other schools in the district. In the year that I worked there, I had few meetings with her, and she did not evaluate my classroom performance. I shared my classroom with two other special education teachers, which made it difficult for lesson planning, writing IEPs, or any other classroom related duties. In the two years I worked as a special education teacher, I

consistently heard my peers complain about the same issues that I faced throughout the school year. I had witnessed these same concerns when I worked as a substitute teacher for both of the school districts that I researched. At this point, I believed that there was a problem within the special education profession, and I imagined the general education teachers were just as overwhelmed in their respective classrooms. The special education teacher dilemma had been hindering school districts from providing consistent educational opportunities for the special needs students of the classroom for over 25 years (Cooley-Nichols et al., 2008). Furthermore, this problem also affected the general education classroom, as well based on the report *A Nation at Risk* (USDOE, 1983). These special education teachers worked side-by-side with general education teachers in presenting the state approved curriculum.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of special education teachers from two school districts, regarding a satisfactory working environment. One school district had an enrollment of approximately 1,600 students within four buildings (Orchard Farm School District, 2015), and the other district had approximately 20,000 students within 21 buildings (MODESE, 2015a). The participating school districts did not provide data regarding turnover, therefore the study focused on special education teacher perceptions of a satisfactory working environment. If there was an issue with dissatisfaction, then a clearer picture of what needed to be done to increase the retention rate of special educators could be known. If there was not a problem, then the study could possibly indicate the reasons that special educators stayed in the classroom. By learning this, educational leaders could possibly modify their policies to retain more special

education teachers. The results of this study may be useful to other school districts facing the problem of a high turnover in special education, due to unsatisfactory working environments. By increasing the retention of special educators, school districts may save money, since there would be a reduction in costs to recruit, train, and retain special educators. The money saved could be used in others areas of education by either adding staff and new programs, or saving for a new capital project.

The special educators from two school districts participated in this study and answered an electronic survey to determine how they perceived their working environment. This information, along with the review of literature will help in determining the relationship between environmental characteristics and a special educator's desires to leave or stay in the profession. This mixed methods study involved a survey, along with interviews with those special educators who were willing to take part in the structured interview. By including personal feelings, the readers will perhaps have a better understanding of what may be needed in the classroom. The results of this study paralleled studies on the same topic to provide a descriptive comparison of how the outcomes compare to each other. The studies included school districts from Virginia and Georgia, along with studies conducted by National Center of Education Information (NCEI) and the NCES. A comparison of results of this study were made to the parallel studies from Georgia and Virginia, as well as to studies provided by NCEI and NCRS. In addition to the quantitative portion of the study, interviews were conducted, and a comparison to similar studies was considered.

Research Questions

Question 1: What are special educators' perceptions of administrative support received?

Question 2: What are special educators' perceptions of the working environment?

Question 3: What are special educators' perceptions of mentoring programs?

Hypotheses

H₁: Special educators will have perceptions of satisfactory administrative and general education support, as measured by questions 2 through 6 on a Likert-scale survey.

H₂: Special educators will have perceptions of a satisfactory working environment, as measured by questions 10 through 14 on a Likert-scale survey.

H₃: Special educators will have perceptions of a satisfactory mentoring program, as measured by questions 17 through 21 on a Likert-scale survey.

Definition of Terms

Attrition: defined as a reduction in numbers because of resignation, retirement, or death (Attrition, 1997). Billingsley (2005) further defined two major types of attrition: Leavers and Transfers.

Certification: The official recognition by the state board of education that an individual met state requirements and is approved to practice as a duly certified/licensed education professional. Missouri also offers different routes for certification, especially in the critical hard to fill subjects such as math, science and special education. For example, a new teacher can take the state exam for special education and if passed be certified as a

special education teacher without any student teaching. The state also offers certification to those certified in other states who want to teach in Missouri (MODESE, 2015f).

Class within a Class (CWC): This type of class includes both regular students as well as those students that need special services to obtain their education. The regular teacher continues to teach the subject matter while the special education teacher works as an assistant to the general education teacher (Yeager, 2014).

Exceptional Children: Intellectually gifted child or physically and/or mentally handicapped child that needs special schooling (Exceptional, 2014).

Feeble-minded: Exhibiting a lack of intelligence (Feeble-minded, 2014).

Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT): The requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 mandated that all teachers be 'highly qualified' by the start of the 2007-2008 school year. By definition, this mandates that if a special educator is teaching math, then the special educator needs to meet the state requirements for certification in that subject (MODESE, 2015d).

Leavers: Teachers that leave the district, but not education. Teachers that leave education or teachers that retire (Billingsley, 2005, p. 12).

Mentor Teacher: Mentoring is a process in which a more experienced person supports and aids a less experienced person in his or her professional or personal development. The state of Missouri requires all newly hired teachers to participate in a mentoring program for two years. A mentor teacher is a tenured teacher or someone who the building principal entrusts in teaching the new teacher how to manage the everyday duties of a teacher (Guptha, 2008).

No Child Left Behind Act (2002): This act is an upgrade to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965). Congress enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 [(ESEA) (P.L. 89-10)], the most expansive federal education bill ever passed to date, on April 9, 1965, as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's 'War on Poverty.' As a former teacher who had witnessed poverty's impact on his students, Johnson believed that equal access to education was vital to a child's ability to lead a productive life. In a 2013 report from Educational Testing Service (ETS), it was reported that one in five school age children suffer with poverty. This same report indicated that the country Romania had a higher child poverty rate than the United States (Educational Testing Service, 2013). The NCLB Act (2002) mandated that the school district meet specific accountability standards and the school districts are now held accountable if they do not meet the standards (MODESE, 2010).

Retention: The act of retaining: the state of being retained (Retention, 1997). Teachers are subject to rehiring each year until they reach tenure and if they are rehired, this is a form of retention by the school district. School districts need to consider all aspects that cause a teacher to leave the profession. By doing this, the rate of retention will increase. If the teacher decides to stay with a school district after obtaining tenure, then that is considered retention. Retention is vital to increased student development so the student(s) have qualified teachers that are effective in the classroom (Boyer & Gillespie, 2002). This is especially true with special educators, who are also case managers and they develop a rapport with the students assigned as part of their caseload. In a report by The American Psychological Association (APA), it was found that when

teachers foster a strong relationship with their students they create classroom environments conducive to learning (Rimm-Kaufman, 2014).

Self-Contained Classroom: This type of classroom usually contains those students that have a difficult time in the regular classroom. The students may exhibit a behavioral disorder, which is disruptive for other students to learn (Algozzine & Morsink, 1989).

Teacher Burnout: In education, this refers to how teachers become stressed with the multiple requirements set forth by federal guidelines, administrators, parents, and paperwork and not enough time to meet the obligations (Billingsley, 2005, p. 26).

Transfers: Teachers that transfer from special education to general education. Teachers that transfer to another special education position within the same district or teachers that transfer to a non-teaching position. These transfers are not much of a concern since they are still within the district (Billingsley, 2005, p. 12).

Limitations

The limitations of the research included a lack of 100% participation of those asked to participate in the survey, which could have had an adverse effect on the results. This research had a return rate of approximately 25%. The comparison surveys did not receive 100% participation, as well. The surveys for Virginia and Georgia received a return rate of 23% and 60% respectively. The researcher from the Georgia survey contacted the survey participants three times, which could have caused a higher percentage of inclusion.

All school districts within the researched county were invited to participate and only two of the five agreed to have their teachers participate. One of the participating

school districts was within a city and covered the northern part of the county, and the other one covered the largest area in the county, which encompassed both unincorporated and incorporated jurisdictions. The school districts that chose to participate had limited my access to school data, such as how many educators left special education and the number of those who transferred to the general education classroom. The economic structure at the time of the study influenced the number of both special and general education teachers employed by a school district. According to journalist Hoak (2015), the level of state funding declined over the seven years previous to her writings. She indicated that the formula used by the state of Missouri to fund schooling was not adequately fulfilling its obligation. She estimated that, due to an economic downturn, school districts lost over two million dollars (Hoak, 2015). Reducing the number of teachers by either attrition or not replacing those who transferred or left the profession could increase the workload on those teachers who remained within the school district. Increased workloads could have an effect on perceptions of the working environment.

Delimitations

“Delimitations are the factors that prevent you from claiming that your findings are true for all people in all times and places” (Bryant, 2004, pp. 57-58). For example, one cannot assume the results of this study’s findings will stand true at another location within the country. One could assume that the same results would not be obtained in the adjoining county. This was primarily due to the social-economic status (SES), leadership styles, and the population of students, to name a few factors that could influence the outcomes.

Students often misunderstand the special research meaning of ‘delimitations’; it does not mean ‘flaws’ or ‘weaknesses.’ Such an interpretation results in an apology for the study, which prejudices the reader against the study at the outset. Instead, the term should be construed as having these other two related denotations: the boundaries of the study, and ways in which the findings may lack generalizability (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005, p. 168).

Conclusion

According to Dewey (1859-1952), “Education is a social process. Education is, not a preparation for life; education is life itself” (Dewey, 1897, pp. 77-80). The education process starts as early as pre-school and continues through to adult lives. Since this involves the student’s progress through the educational system, it is imperative that the system runs with few changes. These changes could disrupt the continuity a special needs student has with his or her case manager, therefore, the new case manager needs to learn of the special needs the student warrants per his or her IEP. This will reduce the overall effectiveness of the student’s educational progress. Special education teachers are important members of the school system and have a high commitment to their students and should be retained whenever possible (Payne, 2005).

This chapter discussed my personal interest in the satisfaction of special education teachers due to my exposure to, what I perceived were, inadequate working conditions. What I perceived as inadequate working conditions did not validate that they were, in fact, that. It was my belief that I would learn more, if research was conducted to further support or dispute my perceptions.

The next chapter involves the literature review and outlines attrition and retention of special educators. These same concerns also affect general education teachers, as well. The review addresses areas such as working conditions, administrative practices, workload, paperwork, the students, and how all of these factors can lead to teacher turnover. There are also positive examples that led to the retention of special educators. Chapter Three outlines the methods used in gathering the data for this quantitative study. In Chapter Four, the findings were discussed and in Chapter Five, the conclusions and recommendations for the study are discussed.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This section of the dissertation focuses on studies related to the chosen topic for research, pertaining to working conditions of special educators. These studies focused on ways to retain, recruit, train, and otherwise reduce the number of special educators leaving the classroom. The parameter of this literature review focused on the 20 years of research prior to the writing of this dissertation. On occasion, older articles were encountered that did not fall within the targeted 20-year-span of research, however the articles either were mentioned in works by other authors or were pertinent to be included in this literature review.

The key words used in the literature search included: special education, burnout, attrition, administration support, working conditions, mentoring, and special education supervision. The literature review included examination of books, professional journal articles, internet sites, published dissertations, scholarly journals, on-line libraries, referred journal articles, Department of Education sites at both the federal and state levels, as well as personal experiences in the special education classroom. The focus of the literature search was on peer-reviewed articles; non-peer reviewed were also used to support information pertaining to the topic of job satisfaction for special educators.

A Brief History of the Disabled and Special Education

The History of Special Education (Winzer, 1993) was written about the challenges those with special needs faced throughout recorded history. This book was chosen as a source for this literature review due to the historical value provided with regard to those born with a physical or mental defect.

The documentation of the disabled dates back to 400 B.C.E. where infanticide was widely practiced to rid society of those persons who did not appear normal (Winzer, 1993). There was mention of those who did not appear normal as early as 10,000 B.C.E., during the ancient Egypt era, but at that time life expectancy for most was short due to the living conditions (Winzer, 1993). Some of the first recorded settlements were by the Sumerians, located around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, or near modern-day Iran (Winzer, 1993). With these settlements came opportunities for the disabled to have a better life, and members of society started to take an interest in the disabled. For example, the blind were employed as beggars, blind girls were employed as prostitutes, and the mentally retarded were used as slaves (Winzer, 1993). This type of employment helped by providing a way for the disabled to support themselves, as opposed to having no source of support. In society at the time of this writing, this would not be an accepted practice, since there were numerous government and private programs in place to prevent these actions.

According to Winzer (1993), there were many beliefs as to why these members of society did not appear normal. These beliefs included blaming everyone from the ancient gods to Satan himself after the rise of Christianity (Winzer, 1993). Aristotle, a philosopher, who lived from 384 to 322 B.C.E., viewed speech as instant and not a skill learned. He stated in *Historia Animalium*, iv, 9, "Men that are born deaf are in all cases dumb; they can make vocal noises but they cannot speak" (Winzer, 1993, p. 18). This particular statement set precedence for treatment of the deaf for the following nearly 2,000 years. People believed that since Aristotle stated it, then it must be true, and no one researched it any further. He referred to this as *Endoxa*, meaning 'accepted things';

‘accepted opinions’ (Smith, 2014). Aristotle said we find ourselves unreflectively endorsing and reaffirming after some reflection of what others believe (Stanford University, 2014).

In the 14th century, the Black Death Plague claimed nearly 25 million lives throughout Europe (Winzer, 1993). With this, came other problems for the disabled or those considered disabled. The heavy loss of life throughout Europe affected everyone from the social elite to the common street vendors. Members of society suffered from the disease or were stricken with terror for fear of getting the disease and would not go outside. This gave the perception that a person was disabled and a new member of society was subsequently preyed upon by society. They showed signs of derangement or signs of insanity, and therefore became prime candidates for the witch hunters (Winzer, 1993). The ‘Witch Hunters’, as they were called, killed nearly 10,000 suspected witches by burning them at the stake or drowning them. The witch hunters believed the sins of Adam what brought death and dissension to life. With the perceived evil in the world, it was believed that Armageddon or end of earth would be decided between Christ and the Anti-Christ, and the world would be destroyed and God would start over with a new world. The witch hunters were looking for individuals who were dissenters, or against the church, in the belief that they were trying to overthrow the church. Those who were deranged from the plague exhibited signs that were not normal; therefore, they were suspected as being the Anti-Christ or the devil. Thus, the disabled displayed the same signs as the deranged. It was not known how many of the witch hunter victims were disabled and suspected of witchcraft (Winzer, 1993).

In the Renaissance Era, an Italian physician, Cardano (1501-1576), was one of the earliest in history to document a known measure for the need for special education. This known measure included teaching the blind how to read by touch with an early version of braille. (Winzer, 1993). During this period of history, scientists and physicians overcame the fear of dissecting the human body and started to discover aspects about the body that were never previously known, such as the structure of the ear and how it works (Winzer, 1993). This discovery presented a new perspective of the causes of deafness, which proved it was not related to the gods, but more of a defect in the structure of the ear.

One of the oldest recorded diseases obtained its official name of scarlet fever in 1685 and was believed to be the cause of such disabilities as retardation, deafness, blindness, and insanity. This disease had been around for so long that it was mentioned in ancient writings as early as 430 B.C.E. (British Medical Journal, 1928, p. 926). Although there was adequate documentation of mental disorders, there still were not adequate services to help these individuals, such as asylums or 'Lunatic Hospitals' (Winzer, 1993).

The 17th century saw the rise in 'Lunatic Hospitals', or hospitals for the mentally ill. In addition, they housed the undesirables, or those who did not appear normal in the community. These same hospitals used the residents as 'side shows' for the public's entertainment, just as the early Egyptians profited from the disabled by using them as beggars and prostitutes. A turning point for the disabled in the 17th century was the opening of more facilities that were public these members of the society. In 1841, Paris, France, opened its first public school for the mentally retarded. Pedro Ponce de Leon (1520-1584), the first special educator, started the first authentic special education program in 1578 in the country of Spain (Winzer, 1993). The spread of similar facilities

throughout Europe and Britain soon followed. The European Enlightenment came to North America in the 18th century, as well as special education concepts (Winzer, 1993). These same special education concepts came to British Canada about 40 years later after they were established in the British colonies of, what was at the time of this writing, the United States.

During the early 19th century, both regular and special education systems advanced. For example, in 1800, Jean-Marc-Gaspard-Itard (1774-1838), a French physician, was hired to work with a 12-year-old boy found wandering in the woods (Safford & Safford, 1996). The boy, later referred to as 'Wild Boy of Aveyron' was deaf and mute. It took five years, but Itard managed to get the boy to dress and pay attention to personal hygiene (Scheerenberger, 1983). The numbers of exceptional children attending institutions for the blind, deaf, and feeble-minded increased throughout the century (Winzer, 1993). The superintendents and school principals provided volumes of documentation of happenings in the classrooms for exceptional children (Winzer, 1993). Gallaudet (1788-1851), in 1817 Hartford, Connecticut, where the first documented institution for the deaf and dumb was established and named the Connecticut Asylum for the Educational and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons. This preceded the opening of many more facilities, both public and private, during the century. The research in these facilities led to discoveries of ways to help the exceptional children of society. With the research, came standardized labels for the different classifications of disabilities, which made understanding and treating them more universal, as psychologist, physicians, and other medical staff could compare discoveries and determine what treatment worked best. Although there were numerous medical breakthroughs, those persons with special needs

were still not accepted by society and were looked upon as degraded or inferior people (Winzer, 1993).

In 1857, the National Teacher's Association (later the National Education Association) was formed to elevate the status of teachers to professional (West, 1984; Winzer, 1993). This helped the special educators, as they had different needs than their general education colleagues. At that time, the special educators were in their own specific organizations. For example, American Instructors for the Deaf and Dumb was founded in 1866 at the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Another organization formed in 1871 was the American Association of Instructors of the Blind, more recently called Association for Educators of the Visually Handicapped. In 1984, this organization and American Association of Workers for the Blind combined to become Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Mission and Work, 2013). In addition, there were other associations and organizations, such as the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), established in 1922, to help generalize accepted remedies for the deaf and dumb, blind, and mentally retarded. In 1924, CEC joined the NEA and became a department within the NEA. It was ironic that women were not considered full members of the National Education Association until 1917 (Winzer, 1993, p. 228), yet they represented the majority of the teachers, and still do at the time of this writing. The described organizations helped those teaching students with special needs, but they were still segregated from the general education teachers. The segregation involved the special needs students served in separate, special schools for the handicapped.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries brought psychological advances in understanding the human mind. The first version of the intelligence test was developed in 1905 by Binet (1857-1911), and Simon (1872-1961) developed the first version of the intelligence test in 1905 (Winzer, 1993). Goddard (1866-1957) gave the test to immigrants entering the United States through Ellis Island in 1913. The results of the test indicated that 83% of Jews, 80% of Hungarians, 79% of Italians, and 87% of Russians were below intelligence level, which ultimately led to a quota, enacted by the government in 1924, limiting the number of immigrants who could enter the country each year (Human Intelligence, 2014, p. 1). This testing presented to the government statistics indicating that those arriving from Europe were uneducated or showing a low intelligence level. Goddard (1914) went so far as to say that the majority of those tested transited across the ocean in the steerage area of the ship, as opposed to the first and second-class sections. The steerage area was located several decks below what was called the main deck of a ship (Norway Heritage, 2014). The movie *Titanic* showed an example of the steerage, or areas below the main deck, when water cascaded down the stairs after the ocean liner hit the iceberg. It was an area not easily accessible and had few amenities for comfort. The steerage area could be considered the coach section of more recent aircraft, for which the ticket price was significantly lower than for those in first class. The quota system stayed in effect until 1965, when it was lifted by the government. The system was based on a fear that if the United States continued allowing immigrants to enter, then the quality of life would decline in the United States. This was still a problem with the influx of illegal immigrants and the burdening costs they presented to the school districts throughout the nation, thus causing a decline in the quality of education provided to those

who were legally residing in the U.S. (Judicial Watch, 2014). These immigrants moved to certain areas of the cities and lived in conditions that were not normal for those already there. For example, there could have been ten family members staying in an apartment designed for four. This could put more strain on the already strained infrastructure (Winzer, 1993). It was suggested by Goddard (1914) that ‘feebleminded’ individuals should not be allowed to marry or have children. He believed that those with learning disabilities could pass the same disabilities to their natural born children (Goddard, 1914). He also suggested these individuals be placed separately on islands, so they could not reproduce, or that society move them to areas of the country to keep them away from the general population (Goddard, 1914). Goddard published numerous books in his lifetime and was recognized as an expert, but since then the majority of his works have been dismissed as poor science, and he was portrayed as a villain of the darkest period of special education (Winzer, 1993). There were suggestions of sterilization for disabled individuals to eliminate the chance of reproduction, and some states initiated the practice as a condition of release from prison. The same intelligence test given to immigrants in 1913 was later used to screen army recruits in 1917, prior to the United States’ involvement in World War I in Europe. The 1920s brought government-sanctioned sterilization to nearly half of the states for the criminally insane, as well as others (Rosenberg, 2012). This ultimately led to the practice of Eugenics.

The History of Eugenics

Eugenics was defined as a science dealing with the improvement (as by selective breeding) of hereditary qualities, especially of human beings (Eugenics, 1997). The process of eugenics was started approximately 50 years prior to Hitler’s Eugenics

Sterilization Law by Galton (1822-1911) of Birmingham, England (Winzer, 1993). In 1906, the Race Betterment Foundation began in Battle Creek, MI, with an endowment from Kellogg (Holmgren, 2012; Winzer, 1993). If it were not for the Carnegie Institute, Rockefeller Foundation, and the Harriman railroad fortunes, the concept of eugenics would have been bizarre parlor talk (Black, 2003). These same philanthropies had connections with some of the leading scientists from prestigious universities, such as Stanford, Yale, Harvard, and Princeton (Black, 2003). The concept of eugenics was taught at colleges and universities from 1914 to 1944 (Winzer, 1993, p. 287).

In 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany, one of the first laws he enacted was the Eugenics Sterilization Law (Black, 2003; Rosenberg, 2012). The Eugenics Sterilization Law supported Hitler's belief that Germany needed a pure 'Aryan' race, which it led to other atrocities during the following 12 years throughout Europe and the Soviet Union. In the first year of the law an estimated 50,000 people were sterilized in Germany due to feeble-mindedness, insanity, epilepsy, blindness, deafness, serious bodily deformity, and chronic alcoholism (Poponoe, 1934, pp. 257-260).

The result of the enactment of the Eugenics Sterilization Law in Germany led the United States to stop the practice of sterilization, institutionalization, and the restriction of marriage from those with special needs (Winzer, 1993). The American public disliked the route that Nazi Germany took with its new law, and ultimately the same practice was abolished in the United States through the court system. For example, in the 1942 Supreme Court case *Skinner vs. Oklahoma* the court ruled that sterilization of a man for stealing chickens was too extreme a punishment. There was no indication that Skinner was disabled, or that just sterilizing him would stop him from committing further crimes.

In addition, the court ruled against the 1927 Supreme Court case *Buck vs. Bell* that supported sterilization of people considered genetically unfit (Holmes, 2013).

Special Education

Bell (1847-1922) introduced the term 'special education' at the end of the 19th century and was considered the first use of the popular term (Winzer, 1993). In 1897, Gordon (1842-1903) of Gallaudet College and Bell petitioned the National Education Association to start an organization named the Department of the Deaf, Blind, and Feeble-minded (Winzer, 1993). The association existed until 1918, when it ceased to exist for unknown reasons. In 1922, the International Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), an association for members of the special education community of teachers, was started and was still in existence at the time of this writing (Winzer, 1993). The members of the CEC focused primarily on the education of special children, including the gifted, deaf, blind, and feeble-minded in the early stages of the association. The association also outlined the standards expected when working with students of special needs. In 1977, there were an estimated 67,000 members in the association (Geer, 1977, pp. 82-89). The home page of CEC indicated a membership of 29,000, which was a decline of more than 50% (CEC, 2013). There was no reason given for the decline in membership. The result of numerous associations catering to special needs students opened up more recognition for these individuals, which led to an increase in opportunities for them to learn.

The first 30 years of the 20th century yielded a significant increase in enrollment in both public school and special education classes (Winzer, 1993). The increase in special education classes led to the need for a generalized classification for the different disabilities leading to labels such as deaf, blind, hard of hearing, near blind,

undernourished, crippled, academically maladjusted, mentally retarded, gift, speech defective, and tuberculin, etc. The multiple classifications of the children led to the need for better training for the teachers to ensure that the children were receiving the necessary training based on their individual needs (Winzer, 1993).

In 1954, the segregation case of *Brown vs. Board of Education* brought attention to the classroom of the special needs children. The advocates for students with special needs wanted them taught in the same schools as normal students, as opposed to being taught in areas where they were segregated from others. *Brown vs. Board of Education* was about the segregation of Black and White students in the schoolhouse. Students with special needs were segregated from their peers in the general education classes. In the 1960s, the federal courts heard arguments focused on five different points in regards to special education. These were that the standardized tests were inappropriate, parental involvement was lacking, special education itself was inadequate, the placement of the student was inadequate, and placement stigmatized or branded the children (Melcher, 1976). It was found that the tests administered to those suspected of having special needs were given inappropriately. For example, the test was not given by a qualified person, nor was it structured so the student would perform to his or her best abilities. An example would be presenting a test that used a standard-sized font versus a larger font to a student who was visually impaired (Osborne & Russo, 2007, pp. 14-15).

This researcher's first assignment as a special education teacher was in the basement of the high school, away from the general education classes. All of the special education classes were on this level or in a trailer outside the building. There remained a problem of segregation of these members of society, as described by Winzer (1993). This

segregation of special needs students led to differences in the quality of education they received, when compared to the regular education students. These special needs students were placed in separate classrooms, and therefore did not receive the same education as the regular students, nor were they able to socialize with the regular students. In the 1970s, it was estimated that between four and seven million children were diagnosed with disabilities who were not getting an appropriate education, which led to Public Law 94-142; the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, signed into law by President Ford (1913-2006) in 1975 (Smith, 1980, pp. 367). This law helped configure the special education classes of today, although there were improvements made over the 35 plus years preceding this study. In 2004, All Handicapped Children Act was reauthorized and became known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and it drastically altered the programs that educators provided to students in the special education classrooms (Osborne & Russo, 2007). The enactment of the No Child Left Behind (2002) Act, authorized by Congress and endorsed by President George W. Bush, added new responsibilities to special educators (MODESE, 2010). NCLB made school districts, school administrators, and teachers more accountable in how they taught the children assigned to their classrooms. However, these laws were specific to those children of school age; eventually these children would graduate from high school and would not have these laws to protect them against unlawful discrimination. To combat this, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted in 1990 to protect these individuals. The law guaranteed that these adults would not be discriminated against due to their specific disabilities, guaranteed that both public and private buildings were

accessible for the handicapped, and required that transportation systems were accessible (Friend, 2005).

Reasons Special Education Teachers Leave the Profession

Research found that special educators left their chosen profession due to characteristics of being younger, less experienced and uncertified (Billingsley, 2004). Furthermore, the special educator may have been prompted to leave the profession because of factors related to the job, or those that were personal (Billingsley, 2005). Personal reasons could range from starting a family and wanting to stay home to raise the children, to actually retiring from the classroom. The other factor was the result of the job itself and all of the duties that came with the position. These duties included, but were not limited to, paperwork, unreasonable demands, administrative support, and students' behaviors, to name a few key issues. As early as 1983, the supply of special educators was a concern when, as outlined in *A Nation at Risk*, and the problem was still with us three decades following that report (Cooley-Nichols et al, 2008).

In a three-year study to determine the causes of the high turnover of special education teachers in the state of Utah, it was found during the study that approximately 1,100 special educators left their positions (Menlove, Garnes, & Salzberg, 2004, pp. 373-383). These teachers were given surveys when they left, and the number one reason for resigning was that they moved out of state. By indicating they moved out of state, it was unclear as to what the real reasons may have been, therefore the results of the research may not be accurate. The second reason was classified as 'other' which was further broken down to include marriage, children, pregnancy, or illness (Menlove et al., 2004). A report by Otto and Arnold (2005) indicated that teachers felt stressed, under-

appreciated, and overworked when they received little or no administrative support. It was found that principal or administrative support played an important role in the decision of a teacher to stay in the profession (Otto & Arnold, 2005). The administrator could play a key role in reducing a special educator's likelihood of transferring out of the profession. For example, administrators should look at what they are asking the special educator to do and ask himself or herself if they would want to be burdened with the same workload. If a special educator was over-worked, it was likely it may lead to that teacher reaching a level of teacher burnout.

Teacher Burnout

School leaders had a responsibility to the students and staff to prevent teacher burnout. Merriam-Webster dictionary defined burnout as exhaustion of one's physical or emotional strength (Burnout, 1997). This was a problem, not only in the special education classrooms across the nation, but also in the general education classrooms as well. Veatch (2006) stated, "In order for districts to maintain a high quality special education teaching force, the impact of feelings of burnout on attrition and retention of special education teachers must be understood" (p. 58). In the classrooms in existence at the time of Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler's (2005) writings, there were too many demands put on the teachers, such as discipline issues, grading, modifying tests for special needs students, and meetings to name a few (Schlichte et al, 2005). This workload put an unnecessary stress on the teacher, which could ultimately hinder classroom performance and the overall academic success of the students in the classroom (Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002).

In 2007, a study conducted by a Capella University student (Jensen, 2007) explored other reasons for special education teacher burnout. She examined the personalities of the teachers using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator's Survey. She focused on five different personality factors such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, or mental illness. Those individuals who scored high on neuroticism were more susceptible to irrational ideas, lack of control for their actions, and had poor control under stress. The study found that those with a high probability of burnout also had a high score for neuroticism (Jensen, 2007). The findings of the study supported that personality does have an impact on a teacher's burnout level. For example, a teacher who remained calm and relaxed was less likely to suffer from teacher burnout, as opposed to those teachers who did not cope well in stressful situations (Jensen, 2007). McIntyre (2011), a research professor in the department of psychology at the University of Houston, researched traumatic stress for 17 years, involving war-afflicted populations to include veterans and civilians. She then decided to study another high-risk occupation; middle school teachers. McIntyre stated, "Teaching is a highly stressful occupation" and "Teacher stress affects various aspects of teacher health and may influence how effective teachers are in the classroom, with potential consequences for their students' behavior and learning" (p. 1). To reduce the number of teachers leaving the classroom due to dissatisfaction, there needed to be some adjustments in the hiring process, and administrators needed to examine the strategies to keep special educators in the classroom. For example, one of the overwhelming aspects of a special educator's job could be paperwork, as discussed in the next section of this literature review.

In a study by the Haberman Educational Foundation (Haberman, 2004), the researcher found that classroom management and discipline were the number one cause of teacher stress, and the number two cause was the perception that teachers had of their administrators. Additionally, it was found that stress was greater in urban versus rural schools (Haberman, 2014). This could be a topic for further study of special education teacher retention.

In a study conducted for *The Journal of Educational Research* it was found that those schools within a southern state that participated learned that increasing salaries, reducing paperwork and better relationships between parents and students would help in retaining teachers. The researcher made contact with 400 schools, inviting them to participate, but participation amounted to 17.5%, or 70 schools (Hughes, 2012, pp. 245-255).

Paperwork

Individualized Education Program (IEP) paperwork was a demanding part of the special educator's workload. The IEP was a multi-page document used to guide the student's teachers on how to present material and what modifications the student needed in the classroom. The U. S. Department of Education's (2014b) website outlined the following 10 steps as part of the basic IEP process (USDOE, 2014d):

- (1) Child is identified as possibly needing special education and related services;
- (2) Child is evaluated; (3) Eligibility is decided; (4) Child is found eligible for services; (5) IEP Meeting is scheduled; (6) IEP Meeting is held and IEP is written; (7) Services are provided; (8) Progress is measured and reported to parents; (9) IEP is reviewed; and (10) Child is reevaluated. (paras. 7-12)

The 'child find' is a process that identified a student who may be struggling academically (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities [NDCCD], 2013). The process of finding these children could range from a teacher who noticed a student was struggling academically to an ad being published in a newspaper. This newspaper ad could be used to contact those of school age who were home schooled or homeless. Following is a list of disabilities recognized and evaluated to determine if a child qualified for special services or other related services. A child's disability could be one or several of the following, thus leading to a more difficult IEP to be implemented.

Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, which adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engaging in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term autism does not apply if the child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance. A child who shows the characteristics of autism after age three could be diagnosed as having autism if the criteria are satisfied (Center for Parent Information and Resources [CPIR], 2014a).

Deaf-blindness means concomitant [simultaneous] hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness (CPIR, 2014c).

Deafness means a hearing impairment so severe that a child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects a child's educational performance (CPIR, 2014d).

Developmental delay, as defined by each state means a delay in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication, social or emotional development, or adaptive [behavioral] development (University of Michigan Health System, 2014).

Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period and to a marked degree, that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- (b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- (c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- (d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- (e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (CPIR, 2014e, para. 7).

The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

Hearing impairment means impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance, but is not included under the definition of 'deafness' (CPIR, 2014f).

Intellectual disability means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested

during the developmental period, which adversely affects a child's educational performance (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2014). The definition for mental retardation was changed to Intellectual Disability with the reauthorization of IDEA in February 2011. In October 2010, President Obama signed Rosa's Law, which changed the term to 'intellectual disability.' The definition of the term itself did not change and is what has been shown above (NDCCD, 2013).

Multiple disabilities means concomitant [simultaneous] impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness (Ohio Department of Education, 2014a).

Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures) (Ohio Department of Education, 2014b).

Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that:

- (a) is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle

cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (b) adversely affects a child's educational performance (CPIR, 2014f, para. 6-7).

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of intellectual disability; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (Helpguide, 2014).

Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2014).

Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma (CPIR, 2014g).

Visual impairment including blindness means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness (CPIR, 2014h).

The term 'adversely affects a child's educational performance' does not mean that a child needs to be failing in school to receive special education and related services (NDCCD, 2013).

When a child was suspected to need specialized instruction in school, the school administrators needed to address this in a timely manner, but not without the legal guardian's permission. The child was evaluated through a series of standardized testing, once permission was received from the legal guardians of the child. The evaluation may consist of a written test, meeting with a child psychologist, observations and written statements from teachers who observed suspected signs of struggling (MODESE, 2014c).

Upon completion of the evaluation, a panel of education professionals and the legal guardian(s) decided if the child was in need of specialized education and if so, how it would be implemented. The professionals included in the panel included those individuals who administered any standardized testing, a child psychologist, occupational and physical therapist, reading specialist and others that may be needed. If the members of the education staff decided that the child would benefit from specialized instruction then it was up to the legal guardian(s) to agree to what was offered. If they did not agree, they could request a hearing to challenge the decision. They could also have an advocate for the child sit in on the meeting to insure the school district complied with IDEA regulations (MODESE, 2014c). This is an example of the requirements to setup and initiate an IEP meeting for a child who may need the services of special education.

Once all parties came to an agreement that the child was in need of specialized instructional services, then the school officials had thirty days to convene and write the IEP. The legal guardians and members of the school staff would be involved in writing the document. The legal guardian(s) could bring someone, such as an advocate who was experience with special education to the meeting. During a meeting the discussion would be how the specialized instructional services would be implemented and for how long each day. This meeting also dictated any accommodations that child may need to be successful. These accommodations could be something as simple as letting the child could take tests away from the others in the class to actually modifying a test so it had fewer distractors, such as three answer choices instead of four. A child could have any number of accommodations, they were part of the child's education program and must be adhered to, and the child's progress reported to the legal guardians at an agreed upon interval (MODESE, 2014g). These accommodations needed to be agreed upon by all parties that attended or had input on a child's IEP and could require additional meetings to accomplish this. There was a deadline of 60 days to get this accomplished.

During the school year, the IEP was reviewed at least once, but needed to be reviewed as often as the legal guardian(s) wanted, and they needed to be advised if there would be any changes to services. The IEP team could request a review as well, if there appeared to be some changes needed in the child's accommodations or services. These changes could involve increasing or decreasing the child's participation in the special education program (Price-Ellingstad et al., 2000). These reviews added to the workload of the teacher and could increase paperwork, which was a concern.

The paperwork loads, numerous meetings, and the different levels of learning abilities of the students they worked with in the classroom could increase the stress level for the teacher (Fore et al., 2002). As a special education teacher, the researcher had an average of 20 students assigned to the caseload, annually. These students all required annual IEPs, which consisted of meetings with parents, teachers, administrators and specialists. Here is an example of what one student's IEP process could consist of in the way of documentation.

(1) Set appointment for IEP with all involved. This will include parents, general education teachers, educational specialists such as speech and occupational therapists. Everyone must agree on the meeting time. (2) Complete all testing and evaluations prior to the meeting. This testing may involve the speech therapist, a child psychologist, behavioral specialist, maybe the school nurse if there are special medical procedures needed. (3) When all testing and evaluations are completed, the IEP meeting is held to discuss the findings. This is when all education specialists, general education teachers, special educators and the parents get together to agree upon the goals and course of action for the student for the next year or until another meeting is scheduled. The case manager or parents can request these meetings at any time if the need arises. (4) When all parties agree, the IEP is completed in its entirety and presented to all of those that have the student in their classrooms as well as a copy given to the legal guardians. When the legal guardians agree on the contents of the IEP, it is then implemented in the classroom (MODESE, 2015a).

The above is just an example of one typical IEP and a process that would be repeated at least once every year for every student of the special educator's caseload.

Therefore, if there were 20 on his or her caseload, then there would be a minimum of 20 IEPs written for the year. If one or more of the students required a three-year reevaluation, then the process started as if the student never had an IEP. This process involved re-testing, interviews with the student, legal guardians and teachers to determine if the student still needed to be provided with the service. Another consideration was the number of accommodations a student may need to be successful in the school year. These were determined individually, based on the students documented disabilities. An example would be the student who had poor vision needing to have all handouts in a larger font to make it easier to read. Another accommodation could require a paraprofessional to be with the student throughout the day, due to behavioral issues. Accommodations could be anything within reason to insure the student was successful (MODESE, 2015e).

In addition to writing IEPs, documenting a student's progress and keeping legal guardians informed, the special education teacher also was required to teach classes. These classes may be in a self-contained room, where all of the students are in need of special instruction. These particular classes were usually smaller than the general education classes and contained those with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders. If the special educator was not in a self-contained room, then he or she may be co-teaching or assisting in a general education class. This involved working with all students in the general education class, along with those that need special attention (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

The IEPs were generated by hand until software companies, in conjunction with school districts, designed computer-based software to make the process of writing IEPs easier and faster (Dempsey, 2009). Dempsey (2009), the Director of the Winston-

Salem/Forsyth County Schools in North Carolina, worked with a software developer to design a program to streamline the IEP process. The program covered all aspects of the IEP process and helped reduce the number of special educators leaving the school district. He estimated that the system reduced the amount of time on IEPs by 50%, which allowed more time for the teachers to spend with the students (Dempsey, 2009, p. 1). It was found that many special education teachers left the profession after becoming disgusted with the amount of paperwork mandated by the administration, with so little time to get it done (Payne, 2005). A computer system could be one strategy administrators implemented to help improve special educator job satisfaction.

In a 2013 *International Journal of Special Education* study of 18 special education teachers regarding the paperwork, it was found that paperwork was time consuming, ridiculous, and redundant. Another concern was the amount of time it took to write IEPs as well as the time away from the classroom setting (Mehrenberg, 2013).

Large Student Caseloads

At the time of their writings, Plash and Piotrowski (2006) stated every year an estimated 13.2% of special educators leave the classroom and 7.2% never return to the classroom (p. 125). This turnover of special educators was the result of many factors pertaining to the profession. This rising number had an effect on the number of students a special educator must monitor on a daily basis. At the beginning of the school year, a special educator received the names of students who would remain on his or her caseload for the year. This number would fluctuate throughout the school year for various reasons. For instance, the special educator may start with 15 students assigned, but due to the lack of special educators available, that number could increase, therefore, adding more

meetings, IEPs, parental phone calls, and paperwork to complete (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

The state of Missouri had guidelines for the number of students a special education teacher could have that were based on the severity of the disability, as well as if the teacher remained in one classroom or traveled between classrooms. The recommendation was between 12 and 22 students for caseload or class size. The following standards can be found within the Missouri State Board of Education Special Education Regulations (MODESE, 2014a).

Caseloads and class size requirements differ between Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and grades K-12. Caseloads for ECSE were mandatory and tied to funding requirements. The standards for grades K-12 were desirable and were not to exceed the maximum caseload then-outlined in the caseload guidance on the Office of Special Education website.

The number of personnel approved for each district was based upon a review of the district's data for early childhood special education. ECSE funding was not be provided for staff serving children who were age five and kindergarten age eligible (MODESE, 2014a).

The state of Missouri suggested using a worksheet to determine the number of students that a Case Manager can handle adequately. The worksheet takes into consideration the number of teaching minutes, meeting times, staffing duties and other duties as assigned. (MODESE, 2014a).

Paraprofessionals and aides may be assigned to specific students and/or may be assigned to classrooms, based upon the number and unique needs of students with

disabilities being served in the classroom. While highly qualified teachers and licensed therapists must design and provide initial or original instruction, support personnel may provide reinforcement and practice of previously taught skills or content. Additionally, appropriately trained support personnel may provide one-on-one tutoring, assist with classroom management, provide assistance in the computer lab, conduct parental involvement activities, provide instructional support in the library, and provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a certified teacher (USDOE, 2014a).

When administrators consider their staffing for the upcoming school year they need to consider the following areas: (1) instructional planning time (minimum of 250 minutes per week of instructional planning during the school day is required); (2) data collection, observation, assessment, and report preparation; (3) consultation and IEP planning with general educators; (4) IEP case management; (5) IEP Team meetings and meetings with parents; (6) age of the children (younger children generally require more assistance with personal tasks such as toileting, dressing, and feeding); (7) travel time between assignments; (8) severity of the disability of the students assigned to the classroom; and (9) ages of students assigned to the classroom (MODESE, 2014a).

When assigning students to a self-contained classroom, consideration should be given to the following: (1) range of needs of the students as specified in their IEPs; (2) unique needs of the students as specified in their IEPs; (3) other duties assigned to the classroom teacher (IEP case management, recess, lunch, etc.); and (4) level of paraprofessional support provided (MODESE, 2014a).

When assigning students to a resource or general education classroom, consideration should be given to the following: (1) The ages and grade levels of the students served; (2) The severity of the disabilities of the students served; (3) The unique needs of the students as identified in their IEPs; (4) The number of IEPs managed by the teacher; (5) Any assessment/evaluation responsibilities of the teacher; and (6) Other duties assigned to the teacher (MODESE, 2014a).

In a 2008 dissertation study conducted by Vernold (2008), the caseload range was six to 50 students per special educator, with an average of 19. Those special education teachers that had only six students were assigned the students with the most severe disabilities, who required more one-on-one attention. This demand in itself was overwhelming and had an adverse influence on a special educator's desire to continue working with the special needs children. When school officials planned for the classes in the upcoming school year, they looked at teacher to student ratios, but did not take into consideration the workload that special educators had in writing and implementing IEPs for their caseload students (Vernold, 2008). The study did not elaborate or suggest that smaller caseloads would reduce the number of special educators from leaving the classroom. This was unlike the next study, which suggested smaller class sizes and caseloads would reduce attrition.

In a research paper by three University of Georgia students, it was suggested that smaller class sizes and caseload sizes for special educators could reduce the attrition rate. They went as far as suggesting that special educators should be paid more than their counterparts in the general education class, but indicated that this would be a politically incorrect way of controlling retention (Fore III & Martin, n.d.). Similarly, a report

published in the *International Journal of Special Education* discovered that smaller caseloads produced a noticeable decline in disciplinary referrals, as well as improvements in teacher morale and attitudes toward teaching. The same report also indicated that the higher caseloads resulted in lower student achievement, which may increase the level of attrition (Zarghami & Schnellert, 2004). This report outlining that smaller caseloads lowered the disciplinary issues was interesting in that by reducing discipline issues it also reduced the needed intervention by the school administrators. By reducing the interventions, the administrators could focus on the needs of the entire school. These needs could be addressed through more training on how to handle unruly students, different techniques to use in the classroom, and helping teachers become better in the classroom. By having better teachers, it is likely that student achievement would be better and the number of unruly students would be lower, thus creating a better environment for both the students and educational staff.

In another report written by Suter and Giangreco (2009) for *The Journal of Special Education*, they suggested that special educators were less likely to ask for paraprofessional assistance if they had a reduced caseload. The paraprofessional is a person who assists a special education teacher in the classroom. These individuals may be assigned to work with specific students or assist in a classroom setting. An example of a paraprofessional's task would be helping a student on an individual basis with an assignment. The student may have difficulties in organizational skills, and the paraprofessional may spend time at the end of the day organizing the student's book bag and writing a note to the parents explaining what homework was due. The paraprofessionals were a good source of information when it came time to writing the

annual IEP or three-year re-evaluation for the special needs child. These individuals should be included in the process of writing an IEP for students they have direct contact with in the performance of their duties. A good paraprofessional was really the person that ran the classroom. The special educator was there as a leader to ensure that all of the students were obtaining their education properly, as outlined in their IEPs. The paraprofessional did not get nearly as much respect as they deserved. In the report by Patterson (2006) there seemed to be some concerns with paraprofessionals and their role in the classroom. For example, one male paraprofessional had concerns about being utilized as a security guard when fights broke out. Another paraprofessional stated that she would end up teaching a class when the assigned special education teacher had an extended meeting (Patterson, 2006).

The previous section discussed concerns about class size and caseload, but there was no set suggestion about how many assigned students a special educator should have to be an effective educator. The state of Missouri suggested between 12 and 22, but this was based on the needs of the students assigned to the special educator, thus not really setting a specific number. The caseload could fluctuate throughout the year, individual students on the special educator's caseload may not fit exactly in the specific guidelines set forth in the state's regulation, and the number of students assigned may not be correct according to guidelines. The regulation also takes into consideration whether the teacher stays in the same classroom or travels to other classrooms throughout the school day.

Administrator Support

Billingsley (2004) found that teachers would leave the profession due to lack of administrator support. Some administrators had little training in the area of special

education; therefore, they had little knowledge in working with special educators and their needs for the classroom. For some administrators, the only knowledge of special education requirements was what they received during their initial education and certification. This lack of experience led to misunderstandings of what the students needed and how to handle their discipline issues. These administrators were responsible for the overall operation of their assigned buildings, which involved the supervision of not only the special educators, but also the general educators, paraprofessionals, maintenance staff, and office staff. In addition, they could have central office responsibilities that go along with their positions. The state of Missouri had instituted a New Directors' Academy to help those in charge of monitoring those that worked with special needs students. This academy explained what needed to be done when a child transferred to a school district and was suspected to need special education services. These responsibilities may be a special project for the school district superintendent, such as a report on how many detentions were issued during a certain month. There were other duties, such as school assemblies, sporting events, prom, and high school graduation, assuming the administrator was a high school principal. It was understandable that so many duties for an administrator may contribute to forgetfulness about the needs of the students and teachers, which could have a significant influence on a newly hired special educator's job satisfaction. Administrators must not forget that the newly hired special educators were like interns, and they may need additional help to survive during the school year (Mason & White, 2001).

The CEC (2009) published an article on an assistant superintendent of Dade County Schools in Florida. The article was about Felton, who was referred to as "The

superman of special education administrators” due to his ability to get things done (p. 1). He was known for his vision to start programs that were somewhat controversial, but effective in the development of students in the school district. Felton, who himself was a special educator, was well aware of the demands placed on the special education teacher; therefore, his goal was to provide them with the best possible training and support. Administrators challenged some of his programs, but he did not change his course and continued with his plans. As a central office employee, he did not let his role keep him from visiting his teachers to seek out their needs and input. It was not uncommon for him to visit classrooms and talk with the students to see how things were going for them. A co-worker said, “He is a voice speaking for the rights of children with disabilities and the teachers who work with them” (CEC, 2005, p. 2). Felton was responsible for a wide range of programs, including Special Education, Student Services, Title I, Charter Schools/Schools of Choice (including Magnet Programs), and Medicaid Reimbursement. He managed over \$50 million dollars in budgets across a number of programs and worked on two major district reorganizations. He led the development of the first data warehouse for use in the Special Education Department to monitor student performance, discipline, and school completion. Felton also collaborated with parent and advocacy groups in the development of more inclusive programs for students with disabilities. He served on the school district’s Narrowing the Achievement Gap committee. Ron served as the Project Manager for All Children Together (ACT), a project designed to increase the participation of children with disabilities and their families in all aspects of community life (Education Development Center, Inc., 2014).

In 2008, the National Association of Elementary Principals (Duesbery & Werblow, 2008) published a report outlining nine different areas of concern for Oregon special education teachers in regards to their working conditions. They ranked them in order of precedence as administrative support, atmosphere, salary, student behavior, material, personal issues, facilities, student skills, and student background (Duesbery & Werblow, 2008). The survey associated with this report indicated that 70-80 % of the 359 special educators and 133 principals indicated that administrative support was in their top three choices with salary and climate the next most important factors for retention of special educators (Duesbery & Werblow, 2008, p. 1).

A 2009 dissertation study conducted by Wilson found that principal support played a key role in the decision of a teacher to transfer to another school district or leave the profession. Furthermore, the study found that informational and appraisal supports were just as important for teachers, but did not influence their decision to leave their current school district or leave the profession. This particular study of six school districts in North Carolina indicated attrition rates ranging from 15% to 23% over a five-year period. These numbers were high and had an influence on the academic success of students assigned to these school districts (Wilson, 2009, p. 87).

In a report by *The Clearing House* (Prather-Jones, 2011), the author found that support by the participant's administrators had a significant influence on desire to stay within the Emotional and Behavioral Disorders classroom. The participants referred to administrators as the building principal or the assistant principal. The participants expected the administrators to enforce the rules and regulations, respect them, and expected support from other teachers (Prather-Jones, 2011).

A report in *The International Journal of Special Education* (Mehrenberg, 2013) went so far as to say that administrators had no clue what they were doing and that their immediate supervisors had unrealistic goals. The administrator needed to work with and for teachers to insure that the students assigned to their particular building received the best education possible. In a report from the New York State Education Department, they suggested that retention of general and special education teachers started with the school administrator. The report outlined that teachers should be involved in decisions that influenced their working conditions, thus they should be able to contribute input prior to any decisions made. This report listed the following survey questions/topics to get suggestions on how to improve retention of educators in general (New York State Education Department, 2014): (1) Building and district support for teachers, (2) Policies and procedures that support teachers, (3) Teacher influence over curriculum and instruction, (4) Appropriate class assignments, (5) Adequate pay scale and financial incentives, (6) Equity application of licensing and certification regulations, (7) Induction and mentoring, (8) Comprehensive students support and discipline systems, (9) Focus on student support and outcomes, (10) Safe environment, (11) Climate of respect, (12) Number of students, (13) Team teaching, (14) Planning time available, (15) Curriculum guidelines, (16) Adequate supply of materials, (17) Technology support, (18) Overwhelming paperwork, (19) Opportunities for professional development, (20) Ability to work with diverse students, (21) System of family communication, (22) Community involvement in support of teachers (New York State Education Department, 2014).

Lack of Resources

In a May 2006 study involving Texas special educators, a major problem cited was the lack of supplies that led to special educators paying for classroom supplies themselves (Caranikas-Walker, Shapley, & Cordeau, 2006). Of the 228 teachers in the survey at least 50% strongly agreed they did not have enough resources to do their job (Kaufhold, Alvarez, & Arnold, 2004, p. 160). Duesbery and Werblow (2008) indicated in their report for the National Association of Elementary Principals that lack of materials was one of the nine concerns for teachers and administrators during this survey. The survey outlined that nearly 50% of the special education teachers believed that access to materials was a good source of retention. In an article written by Koskey (2010) for the *San Francisco Examiner* about the San Francisco School District, it was found that lack of books strains the students. As a special educator, this researcher experienced a shortage of books and had to share textbooks with another teacher. Koskey indicated that the lack of books was district wide, but the high schools suffered the most. The Deputy Superintendent blamed the lack of books on a lack of accountability at the school level to account for the books. There was also blame aimed at the state for not expediting the decision on which books to use to support the curriculum (Koskey, 2010).

Salary

The state of Utah conducted research on the reasons special educators were leaving, and salary was not listed as a cause (Menlove et al., 2004). Although, Duesbery and Werblow (2008) indicated in a report for National Association of Elementary Principals that salary was one of the top three causes for special education teachers to leave the classroom (Duesbery & Werblow, 2008). In another study on the attrition of

teachers, it was noted that salary was the only predictor of a teacher leaving the profession, out of the six potential predictors examined in the survey (Makovec, 2008). A report by *Teacher Education Quarterly*, suggested that increasing the wages of special educators might reduce or even eliminate shortages (Sindelar, Bishop, Brownell, Rosenberg, & Connelly, 2005). In another report prepared by Billingsley (2003) for The Center of Personal Studies in Special Education, it was found that salary was clearly associated with special education attrition. Salary was not a concern, based on the results of this research. Teacher salary was one of the research questions in determining work place satisfaction (Billingsley, 2003).

The National Education Association's web page indicated the average 2011 annual starting salary for teachers started at \$35,672.00, which was \$5,815.00 more than the annual starting salary of \$29,857.00 for teachers in the state of Missouri (National Education Association, 2014a, p. 1). If Missouri teachers were paid at or above the national average, it would amount to approximately \$484.58 per month more in wages. The above-mentioned research suggested that if teachers made more money, then the attrition rate would be lower. This could have posted a problem in the state of Missouri, teachers since they started at a lower beginning salary than reported for other states. Research also suggested that teachers left within the first five years of getting started within the profession, which coincided with a beginning teacher's low salary phase. It was not suggested paying more would cause teachers to stay in the profession, but fair compensation could reduce attrition. To influence the attrition rate, teachers have to want to stay and must enjoy their work. It comes down to the working environment and support received by school administrators.

Having a Mentor

“Overwhelming!”, “Much more difficult!”, “Lost!”, “Horrible”, and “Very stressful!” (Amos, 2005, p. 14). These were responses from first year special educators when asked what the first year of teaching would have been like if they had not had a mentor. Amos (2005) stated that “Because approximately one third of the beginning teachers did not find formal mentoring programs helpful, care must be taken in the design and evaluation of these programs” (p. 14). The data collected through research indicated that the five most important areas of support needed by special educators during their first few years of teaching were assistance with IEPs, curriculum and teaching, forms and paperwork, behavior management, and help with problem students (Mason & White, n.d.). These areas of concern for new special education teachers needed to address them with those who were mentoring new teachers. In order to address these areas, the mentors needed to become aware of them. During this researcher’s study, no standard curriculum for training mentors was found. There were requirements for new teachers to participate in a mentoring program, but no standards regarding what they should be taught. During this researcher’s tenure as a police officer, he taught new police officers at the police academy, as well as in the patrol car. Prior to working in this capacity, there was a requirement to attend a week of ‘in-service’ training to learn what new police officers needed to know, once they graduated from the police academy. This same concept should be used for new mentors for teachers, so new teachers fresh out of college will get adequate training to make them successful in the classroom.

It was necessary for special education teachers to be successful, they needed to participate in a mentoring program with a competent mentor, one who believed in the

program and wanted the new teachers to succeed (MODESE, n.d.). Mason and White (2001) outlined the following reasons for a mentoring induction program for teachers: it capitalizes on existing resources already in the district, it is cost effective, and there is evidence to support that proper mentoring will increase retention of teachers. Mentoring was so important in retention of teachers that the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education changed its approach and implemented both state and national standards (MODESE, 2015f).

In a study conducted by Andrews and Quinn (2005), two math professors' research at the University of Nevada-Reno on first year teachers' perceptions on mentoring programs resulted in the following findings. They sent a questionnaire to 188 teachers identified as first year teachers, of which only 182 were actually first year teachers (Andrews & Quinn, 2005). There was a significant difference between the amount of support received by those mentees with a mentor versus those without a mentor. The study supported the importance of a strong mentor program, with dedicated teachers and administrators. It also emphasized the matching of mentee and mentor as an important aspect of a strong program. For example, the mentee and mentor should teach the same subject and be able to work with each other without conflicts. The mentor should be easily accessible for the new teacher and should be in the same building (Andrews & Quinn, 2005).

In a qualitative study conducted in 2009 by Sleppin, he found evidence to further support a strong new teacher induction program. He invited nine new teachers, with one-to-three years' of classroom experience, to participate in a face-to-face interview, of which only eight participated. There were 11 questions asked during the process. When

the interviews were completed, three distinct conclusions were present; the first one supported mentoring and a teacher support program. One participant in the research was a special education teacher, who was the only special educator in the building and felt somewhat isolated. Some of her peers thought she was part of a child study team, of which she was not. The same study suggested that administrators, new teachers, community stakeholders and college students participated in and supported teacher-mentoring programs. It was the belief of Sleppin (2009) that this would reduce attrition and the isolation felt by new teachers.

In research by Andrews and Quinn (2005), they discovered that having the mentor and mentee in the same building benefited the new teacher. Furthermore, the subject matter for both the mentor and mentee should be the same. In the article by Sleppin (2009), a special education teacher participant was the only special educator in the building and felt isolated. This special educator should have been with other special educators to make it easier to collaborate.

The state of Missouri set guidelines for properly administering a mentoring program, which listed the minimum requirements to have an effective program. The Missouri Mentoring Standards (CSR 20-400.380) did not indicate specific guidelines for special education teachers, although it did indicate that mentors should teach the same subject matter and be available. There was no specific site that listed the mentoring guidelines for each state; therefore, the states were looked at individually, and it was found that the majority of the states did have some type of mentoring program (MODESE, 2015f).

Reasons Special Education Teachers Remain in the Profession

The previous sections outlined reasons why teachers left the classroom and how mentoring helped a new teacher. The state of the mentoring program was not a reason they left, but a good mentoring program can reduce the possibility of a teacher leaving early in the career. Some of the reasons identified were the result of burnout, lack of administrator support, lack of resources, and personal reasons. Why do special educators stay in the classroom when there are so many demands placed on them? The demands placed on special educators was countered by participating in activities, such as exercise, leisure reading, professional development, church, hobbies, supportive administrators, and whatever they could do to reduce stress (White, 2007).

In addition to the reasons listed that help special educators stay in the classroom, there have been numerous studies to learn what works and what does not work to keep them in the classroom. In the November/December 2008 issue of *Principal*, both teachers and principals indicated that administrative support ranked among the top three reasons teachers remained in their then-current positions (Duesbery & Werblow, 2008). One way to improve the probability of teachers staying in the classroom was to create a Teacher Support Program (TSP), where there was support for teachers suffering from burnout and stress. This same program could increase retention, job satisfaction, and help increase teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Westling, Herzog, Cooper-Duffy, Prohn, & Ray, 2005). The Western North Carolina University Teacher Support Program was the result of the need to stop the rapid resignations of special education teachers. The program had three key areas of concern to help increase the retention of teachers: mentoring programs, teacher assistance teams, and staff development sessions.

This program could even support those teachers who had not reached the level of burnout obtained by their peers. The participants in the program could include experienced teachers, administrative staff, and other members of the teaching staff who could share their concerns about teaching as a career. The use of a TSP needed to be on a volunteer basis; therefore, it would not add stress to the teacher seeking assistance. Furthermore, the program should have no bearing on the teacher's administrative evaluation. If this were the case, then few teachers would participate in the program, due to the fear of receiving an evaluation based on the participation in the program (Westling et al., 2005). At the time of Westling et al.'s (2005) writings, there was very little research involving Teacher Support Programs, but it appeared to be a great source of support for those teachers who would benefit.

No Child Left Behind

The reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 in January 2002 added the requirements set forth in No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB required all students, including those with special needs, to meet the same standards. Among the groups who had difficulties in meeting the rigorous standards were the sub-categories that included special needs students and free and reduced lunch students. The newly enacted NCLB mandated that by the 2013-2014 school year, all students would be proficient in math and reading, and it was the belief by teachers, administrators, and parents that this was an unrealistic goal for some students (Johnson, 2012). The individual states were responsible to meet these requirements, but the unfortunate part of this was that there were no set standards to follow in setting up the program to assess the progress of the students. A majority of the special education students participated in their

respective states' regular assessments. These students must meet the same standards as the regular education students to meet proficiency levels (Center View, 2004). At the time of this writing (2015), achievement of 100% proficiency in mathematics and language arts was not achieved at the end of the 2014 school year (MODESE, 2015c).

The demands of NCLB were difficult to achieve due to the high expectations placed on school districts and the students within those districts. The state boards of education set the standards to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a target that raised the bar higher each year, and every year schools fell farther behind by not meeting the standards. In an article written by Johnson (2012), he stated, "100% of the school's population passing reading and math standards is like mandating world peace by 2014" (p. 1). When a school did not meet the state standards due to the special education populace, there was greater demand placed on teachers to make the standards the following year. This created more stress, added to an already stressful profession, with all of the previous demands placed on the special educator. These demands were also placed upon the general educator as well, since the mandate was for all students to be proficient in all core subjects (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). In 2007, the Minnesota Public Radio published a report about a local high school that produced students with ACT scores the highest it had been in 20 years, along with a 98% graduation rate. However, based on the standards of No Child Left Behind, the school was classified as not making AYP. This was based on special education students not meeting the cutoff score for proficiency in the math test (McCallum, 2007). When President Obama took office, he made further enhancements to NCLB, in hopes of increasing the number of successful students.

In 2011, President Obama introduced the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which essentially adjusted President Bush's 2002 No Child Left behind Act. The following is a Blueprint for Reform of what both President Obama and Duncan, the U. S. Secretary of Education, proposed to promote an increase in the quality of education for the nation's schools (USDOE, 2014a).

President Obama's Blueprint for Reform planned to fix NCLB's flaws by:

- (1) Asking states to set standards that prepare students for college and careers.
- (2) Creating a fair accountability system that recognizes and rewards growth and progress.
- (3) Providing flexibility to state and local educators to innovate and create local solutions.
- (4) Focusing rigorous, meaningful interventions and support for the lowest-performing schools that also have not demonstrated any progress. (USDOE, 2015a, p. 2)

The accountability system would:

- (1) Recognize and reward schools that increase student achievement and close achievement gaps and recognize and reward districts and states that turn around their lowest-performing schools.
- (2) Give the majority of schools and districts the flexibility to use a wide variety of data to design their own improvement plans to increase achievement and close gaps.
- (3) Challenge schools that have achievement gaps that are not closing or low student achievement that is not improving to use data-driven, evidence-based interventions.

(4) Require states to identify the bottom 5 percent of their schools that have not made progress and turn them around using one of four models. These schools have been low performing year after year. It is time to stop tinkering around the edges. These schools will need dramatic changes to produce dramatic results. (USDOE, 2015a, p. 2)

Highly Qualified Teachers

What does the phrase ‘highly qualified special education’ teacher mean?

According to the Council of Exceptional Children, it means the special educator needed to possess a valid state certification in not only special education, but also the core subject in which he or she taught (CEC, 2005). This requirement limited the number of special educators available for the classroom, therefore, creating a shortage in candidates for school districts to hire. Prior to these requirement teachers only needed to meet the requirements mandated by the state where they worked to be a special education teacher. Those wishing to be special educators completed the required coursework at the university and took a test proving proficiency in the profession. This particular test did not determine competency in teaching a specific subject, such as math or science, which continued to be highly technical subjects and in short supply. It was acceptable prior to July 1, 2006 for special educators to teach core subjects, as long as they had a certification in special education (CEC, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2007a), as of the end of the 2005-2006 school year all teachers were required to have a bachelor’s degree, meet all state certifications, and prove they could teach the subject. This created a burden for school districts in that they authorized an alternative route to obtain these highly qualified teachers.

The demand for more teachers in critical areas, such as mathematics, science, and special education was a major influence on the growth of alternative routes for certification. These alternative routes could go so far as to waive the necessary course work in educational philosophy, pedagogy, and student teaching (Rosenberg, Boyer, Sindelar, & Misra, 2007). The U.S. Department of Education came up with an alternate route for certification. It was given the acronym; HOUSSSE, which stands for High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation. This authorized school districts to look at each teacher individually and determine, based on experience, education, and professional development, if he or she was qualified to teach a certain core subject (USDOE, 2015b). This process allowed teachers to apply for a certification in a subject area using the experience they had teaching the subject. The process required documentation of all training, classroom experience with the subject, and the state certification agency to issue a certificate to teach the subject.

In the state of Missouri, prospective teachers could enter the education field by completing a state recognized teacher preparation course and passing a Praxis exam for proving knowledge of content matter. This process was the result of the high numbers of teachers leaving the profession for various reasons and not enough teachers graduating from teacher preparation programs to replace them. There were significant issues regarding alternative routes to licensure written in the literature. One issue concerned the possibility that new teachers would stay in the teaching profession until the economy gave them an opportunity to return to their originally chosen profession. Colleges and universities needed to monitor this potential problem, as some of these new teachers left high paying jobs to become teachers (Rosenberg et al., 2007). The traditionally trained

teachers felt they were better trained, because they had to complete more classes and participate in a longer student teaching segment of their training (Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education, 2005). There were some studies that suggested that those teachers who participated in an alternative certification process had a tendency to leave the profession sooner than those who participated in the traditional process (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004). Teachers who left the profession early may have done so due to working conditions, such as poor administrative support.

Conclusion

The need for special educators has been a problem for over 35 years since *A Nation at Risk* first reported the issue. There have been numerous articles written on the subject of special educators leaving the classroom, but the problem was still found within the schools of the nation. There was progress at the state and local levels to reduce teacher turnover, but not enough to halt the steady growth of teacher turnover (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2006). If politicians, administrators, and teachers worked together, this problem could be resolved, and the ultimate outcome would be the removal of the revolving door in special education classrooms.

For example, bureaucracy failed in part because it highlighted those in leadership, over expertise. This type of ideology followed the same path for the past century. Public education has been a tool politicians have used to get elected. No political figure has the necessary experience to govern all aspects of the government, let alone the education system, giving an exception to Lyndon B. Johnson, who himself was a teacher (Abramsky, 2014). Those individuals leading the education reform, such as Gates, Rhea and Duncan, lacked the necessary experience to oversee the reform. This form of

leadership set the system up for failure. If there was not a true leader in charge of the education system, then there would be a continuous failure of policies enacted for reform (Thomas, 2014).

Some feel there should be a separation of education and state, as there is for church and state. If this were to come about, then possibly there would be a chance for true education reform. Krashen (2014), an education professor at the University of Southern California went so far as to suggest that the real cause of our failing school system was poverty. If educators and researchers worked together and reduced or eliminated poverty, then the education system would be better off.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of Chapter Three is to describe the methods used to gather and analyze the data for this dissertation study. The purpose of this research project was to determine the perceptions of characteristics of a satisfactory working environment for special education teachers within two school districts located in the Midwest. A quantitative and qualitative, i.e. mixed methods, approach was used to learn what connections existed between the variables measured. The literature review supported this study, due to examination of the continuous number of special education teachers leaving the classroom, or education in general, due to dissatisfaction. These same concerns were evident in the 1983 report by the U.S. Department of Education's *A Nation at Risk*.

In 2005, the Alliance for Excellent Education estimated that school districts throughout the nation would spend an estimated \$2.2 billion dollars annually replacing teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, p. 1). This did not take into account those teachers who transferred to other districts or retired. If these figures were included, it could cost districts upwards of \$4.9 billion dollars. In 2008, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2007) conducted a similar study and estimated it would cost school districts nationwide approximately \$7.34 billion to recruit, hire, and train replacement teachers (NCTAF, 2008, p. 11). Therefore, I estimate the average annual costs for replacing teachers based on these figures is \$6,120,000,000.00, or approximately 108,491 teachers at an average 2011-2012 annual salary of \$56,410.00 (Institute of Educational Services, 2014).

Research Design

The participants in this study possessed a special education certification and worked within the special education classroom, in order to participate in the research. By using a survey, respondents had a chance to anonymously present their perceptions of a satisfactory working environment. In Levine's (2001) dissertation, *An Examination of the Factors Related to the Attrition and Retention of Special Education Teachers in Cobb County, Georgia*, the researcher gathered her information by sending out surveys to those teachers within her school district. She compiled and sorted the data manually. In the dissertation by Wilson (2009), *The Relationship between Principal Support and New Teacher Attrition*, the data was compiled in the same manner and the surveys were sent via the United States Postal Service to the participants. This researcher chose an electronic survey as the delivery method, due to the ease of administering it to the participants, as well as the reduced cost.

The survey instrument incorporated a Likert style questioning, which gave the participants the opportunity to rank their responses according to their perceptions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The researcher specifically designed the instrument used (Appendix B), based on proven designs by other researchers, to complete his research. The tool was found to be a valid instrument since its design was presented to members of the researcher's committee for validation. Validation was based on the experience of these professionals, who have held positions within the public and private sectors of various learning environments. The design included demographic information, although, no specific identifying factors were included to ensure the anonymity of the participants. The overall objective of the survey was to determine the perceptions of a satisfactory

working environment within two school districts in in the Midwest. These two school districts ranked in the number of special educators employed from 10 to nearly 200.

The independent variables in this study included working environment satisfaction areas found in the literature to have a great deal of influence on a special educator's desire to remain in the profession. These areas were administrator satisfaction (classroom support), mentor support, and working conditions. The dependent variable was the notation of the participating special educator either staying or leaving the profession.

The participants of the research were directed to the Survey Monkey® website to complete the survey. Survey Monkey® was a user-friendly, on-line survey service. The researcher then received the results of the survey with no identifying participant information included.

This quantitative research was used to determine what perceptions a special educator considered as a contribution to a satisfactory working environment. A quantitative design was important when the research is based on data from a survey, as in the case of this research. Quantitative research uses numbers and statistical methods (Thomas, 2003). To further support findings, the researcher included written responses from teachers who accepted the invitation to participate. This mixed method study incorporated both data from the survey and written responses, to allow a better understanding of the research results. The using of a survey was found to be standard in determining factors relating to a specific area of concern. The survey needed to be designed for the specific intended audience in mind. For example, one would not expect a person without a medical degree to complete a survey pertaining to specific practices

utilized in the diagnosis and treatment of a disease. The design of this survey was based on the needs of special educators and what they would possibly consider a satisfactory working environment (Bullock-France, 2008). Research Questions and Hypotheses addressed during this research are listed in the next section.

Parallel Studies for Descriptive Comparison

A comparison of results of this study will be made to the parallel studies from Georgia and Virginia, as well as to studies provided by NCEI and NCES.

Georgia

The research conducted by Levine (2001) in Cobb County, Georgia, found that teachers' reasons for leaving the special education classroom was not due to incompetence. Those who participated in the research expressed that they were adequately trained in most areas. Furthermore, they received additional staff development to meet the demands of a special education teacher.

Results indicated that special educators had too much paperwork and a difficult time balancing paperwork with the demands of the classroom. Another concern was lack of support by administrators, since the demands of special needs students differed from those of the general education classroom. There was no indication of lack of knowledge of special education laws by administrators.

Special education teachers left the school district within seven years, 65% of the time. Retention of teachers was an issue with the school district of study. Teachers would either leave the district or move to other buildings in the school district.

Levine (2001) suggested that concerns of the teachers who chose to stay should be addressed before more teachers left the special education field. These concerns

involved issues with paperwork, working conditions, IDEA mandates, lack of support by administrators, and stress (Levine).

Virginia

In a research project by Bullock-France (2008), it found that the following areas were not predictors that influenced special educators to leave the profession: (a) job satisfaction, (b) support, (c) stress, (d) salary, (e) teacher preparation, (f) working conditions, (g) administrative support, and (h) mentor-mentee relationships.

Although these were not predictors to influence a teacher to leave, participants did express during the open-ended question portion of the study that morale had an effect on their willingness to leave. Low morale could be the result of any of the above non-predictors. Those who answered the open-ended questions indicated that support and guidance would help influence their desire to stay with a school district (Bullock-France, 2008).

The National Center for Educational Information

Feistritzer (2011) reported that the National Center for Educational Information conducted public teacher profiles in 1986, 1990, 1996, 2005 and 2011. These profiles suggested that teachers were competent, when dealing with the administrative hierarchy. Yet, 96% to 98% expressed concerns that greater participation at the building and district levels in decision making would help make teaching more a profession.

Overall, the majority, or over 80%, were satisfied with their working conditions, job satisfaction and their relationships with the building principals (Feistritzer, 2011).

National Center for Educational Statistics

A 2012-2013 NCES indicated that 7% of the teaching profession left, while 84% stayed at their current assignments. Of those teachers who left the profession, 51% indicated they had a manageable workload. Furthermore, nearly 45% indicated they had better working conditions with their current administrators or managers than in their previous assignment. Further, it was indicated that over 42% did not have better or worse conditions than in their previous position. Of those that did leave, nearly 59% had more input with their new positions, 51% had a more manageable workload and 52% had better working conditions (as cited by USDOE, 2012b, p. 13).

Research Questions:

Question 1: What are special educators' perceptions of administrative support received?

Question 2: What are special educators' perceptions of the working environment?

Question 3: What are special educators' perceptions of mentoring programs?

Null Hypotheses

Administrative support was a key area of concern in the review of literature. If special education teachers had more support from their administrators, there would very likely be less of turnover of special educators. The support is not only limited to the administrative aspect, but should also include working conditions. Working conditions covers not only the physical classroom, but also time to complete necessary paperwork, supplies and compensation.

H₀₁: Special educators will not have perceptions of satisfactory administrative and general education support, as measured by questions 2 through 6 on a Likert-scale survey.

H₀₂: Special educators will not have perceptions of a satisfactory working environment, as measured by questions 10 through 14 on a Likert-scale survey.

H₀₃: Special educators will not have perceptions of a satisfactory mentoring program, as measured by questions 17 through 21 on a Likert-scale survey.

Population

This study involved participation by teachers certified in special education. The school districts in which the participants in the research worked were located in Missouri. The total number of certified special educators in these school districts was 201, and all work within the special education field. Both school districts were located in Saint Charles County and ranked in size from number 40 and 59 out of 529 Missouri school districts (MODESE, 2015c, study school).

The smallest district had 1,572 students enrolled in 2014, with a total graduation of 84. Of those 84, approximately 74.70% took the ACT, with an average composite score of 23.1. This same district had an average teacher salary of \$52,639, which was \$5,883 more than the Missouri average of \$46,756. The average administrator salary for this same district was \$120,681, which was \$33,482 more than the Missouri average (MODESE, 2015a, district statistics).

The other district had 19,834 students enrolled in 2014 with a total graduation of 1,407. Of those 1,407 graduates, approximately 75.62% took the ACT with an average composite score of 23.2. This same district had an average teacher salary of \$58,233, which was \$11,447 more than the Missouri average. The average administrator salary for this district was \$113,390, which was \$26,191 more than the Missouri average (MODESE, 2015a, district statistics). According to the web site, School Digger® both of these school districts moved up in the rankings among the Missouri school districts. During the 2009-2010 school year, the Orchard Farm School District ranked 175 out of 529 school districts. In the 2013-2014, it ranked 59, which was an increase of 116. During this same period, the Francis Howell School District went from ranking number 40 to 28 out of the 529 school districts. This amounted to an increase of 12 (Missouri District Ratings, 2015).

Informed Consent

The study design required direct participation by special educators in the completion of a special education teacher survey. The outcome of the survey application was to determine if there was a problem with special education teacher turnover by asking the same set of questions to all special educators participating in the online survey. Prior to conducting the survey, the superintendent of each school district received a letter stating the purpose of the survey and that participation in the survey was strictly on a volunteer basis (Appendix A). The researcher advised the superintendent that all raw data collected would be held in strict confidence and would not be made available to anyone other than the researcher. Additionally, an offer was made to share results of the finished project with the school districts employing the educators who participated in the research.

The special education teachers who participated in the survey had to agree or disagree with an implied consent statement, which was the first screen presented to them when directed to the survey site web page. If they chose 'I do not agree' with the implied consent statement, they were taken to the end of the survey and not given the opportunity to participate. The survey was conducted through a commercial service; therefore, no identifying information was made available to the researcher. The participants were given the opportunity to provide their contact information if they were willing to participate in written responses. This information became part of the survey results. There was little potential risk or benefits to the participants who completed the survey.

Sampling

The special educators of the two participating school districts were chosen due to the vast socioeconomic levels of the students throughout the Midwest County. The living circumstances of students enrolled in school ranged from rural farm areas to urban city settings. The range of societal status of the students was anywhere from at or below poverty level to living in million dollar homes. By inviting special educators of these two school districts to participate, the researcher could gain a true representation of what special educators see and deal with in the classrooms, across the socio-economic spectrum. All completed surveys were used as a part of a convenience sample, versus using a random sample. Permission to conduct the survey was obtained by contacting the superintendents of the school districts (Appendices A, C, and D).

Sample

The participants for the research project came from two different school districts in the Midwest. These districts were significantly different in size in that one district had

fewer than 25 special educators and the other had more than 175. Of the nearly 200 possible participants to the survey, 51 responded, which gave a response rate of approximately 25%. The low number of participants could be the result of a number of reasons such as the timing of the survey. The survey was presented to the special educators during the month of April, which is traditionally a busy time of the school year. The special educators were preparing their students for final exams and writing IEPs that were due during the summer break. This was also the time of the year when special educators were notified regarding their contract renewals for the next school year. During the time of the study, the education profession had to make significant cuts in the previous few years, due to reduced funding. This in itself could have influenced the results of the survey. The researcher found during evaluating the survey results that 14 participants started the survey, but did not answer any questions for unknown reasons. Perhaps they only wanted to submit to an interview or just provide their personal perceptions during the narrative part of the survey.

Instrumentation

The research instrument involved a Likert-type survey with four possible responses to each question, which was used for the parallel studies conducted in Georgia and Virginia. These two studies were described in Chapter Three. The responses ranked the participants' perceptions of how they liked their current working conditions. The possible responses were; 'Not Very Satisfied', 'Somewhat Satisfied', 'Satisfied', and 'Very Satisfied'. The instrument was designed by the researcher, with the input from members of the researcher's dissertation committee and university staff. The survey was not used on any other sample population prior to publication.

The participants of the survey were given an option to participate further with written responses by submitting their contact information to the researcher. These individuals were contacted and provided additional information, which provided the researcher with qualitative data.

Data Collection

The independent variables of administrative support, school climate (working conditions), and mentor support were used in determining the characteristics of a satisfactory working environment. The dependent variable for the study was the satisfaction of special educators in their working environments. The literature review outlined numerous areas of concern that could possibly lead to a special educator leaving the profession. In addition, there were suggested improvements in working conditions to promote increased satisfaction of special educators and keep them in the classrooms.

The survey was administered on-line to those teachers who elected to participate in the research. The researcher sent letters to the superintendents of each school district explaining the research and the objectives of the study (Appendix A). There was a four-week window for teachers to complete the survey, once it was approved that the teachers could participate. After the second week, the researcher sent out another request for survey completion, to increase the number of participants who provided data for analysis. The publication of the survey was in April 2011, after the winter break. By publishing the survey at this time, a more accurate reading of how the teachers felt about their respective school districts could be learned. At the time of the survey, there was the possibility that some of the educators may have received notice that their contract for employment was not renewed for the next school year. This in itself may have influenced the outcome of

the survey. The researcher chose written responses, as opposed to face-to-face interviews, to eliminate bias, since the researcher had previously worked for both school districts.

Data Analysis

The number of survey participants totaled 51 for a 25% response rate, and all completed surveys were used in data analysis. The studies used in comparison ranged from 23% percent to 68% response rate. Data from the survey was grouped and analyzed, based on the specific questions asked in the survey. The data was presented both graphically and statistically to allow decisions concerning whether to reject the null hypotheses.

The *t*-test for difference in means was used due to the low sample size. This type of test is used when the sample size is less than 30 and when there is not enough information on which to base conclusions on (Rumsey, 2003). The *F*-test for difference in variance was also used, which compares two means by comparing two variances or standard deviations (Bluman, 2008). This was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in teachers' perceptions with regard to satisfaction with working conditions.

Summary

This chapter outlined the process obtaining information for this research project. The overall purpose of the research was to determine if there was a connection between working conditions, such as administrative support, mentor support, working conditions, and training to name a few, and the desire of a special educator to leave the classroom or profession due to not being satisfied.

The researcher asked voluntary participants to go to a web site where the survey was created and stored for this purpose. The survey was found to be a reliable instrument in obtaining information to determine if there are relationships between certain variables. The dependent variables were the special educators' desire to leave or stay in the special education classroom. The independent variables were the factors that may have contributed to the special educators desire to leave the classroom.

This particular research instrument was designed specifically for special education teachers. It was important that the survey design reflect the audience for which it was written. The research design provided for confidentiality of participant responses; a password-protected laptop secured the data. All participants who completed the survey were special educators in Saint Charles County, Missouri. The data was collected using a commercial service, which added an additional layer of confidentiality for the participants.

Chapter Four: Presentation of the Data

The purpose of this study was to determine what special educators perceived as most important when involved with their working environment. This section will compare the results of this research to the results of four similar surveys. The participants ranged from 51 to over three million. The surveys from Georgia and Virginia used the same instrument, which made the comparison much easier. In addition, the results were compared to a 2011 report by the National Center for Education Information (NCEI) and the 2004-2005 Teacher Follow-up Survey by the NCES. A private non-partisan group conducted the NCEI survey and the NCES is the result of a survey by the U.S. Department of Education. The participants answered a Likert style survey and were given the option of providing further input through an interview.

Research Questions:

Research questions guiding the design of this study were:

Question 1: What are special educators' perceptions of administrative support received?

Question 2: What are special educators' perceptions of the working environment?

Question 3: What are special educators' perceptions of mentoring programs?

The survey gathered some general demographic information. The majority of the participants were female with 35 as opposed to the number of males, which were two. Fourteen participants did not respond to the question about gender. The results in the comparison studies ranged from 75.6% to 88.0% female.

It was found that nearly 75% of participants had a master's degree or above and the rest had only a bachelor's degree, which is the minimum needed to obtain a teaching certification. Again, 14 did not respond to this survey question about level of education.

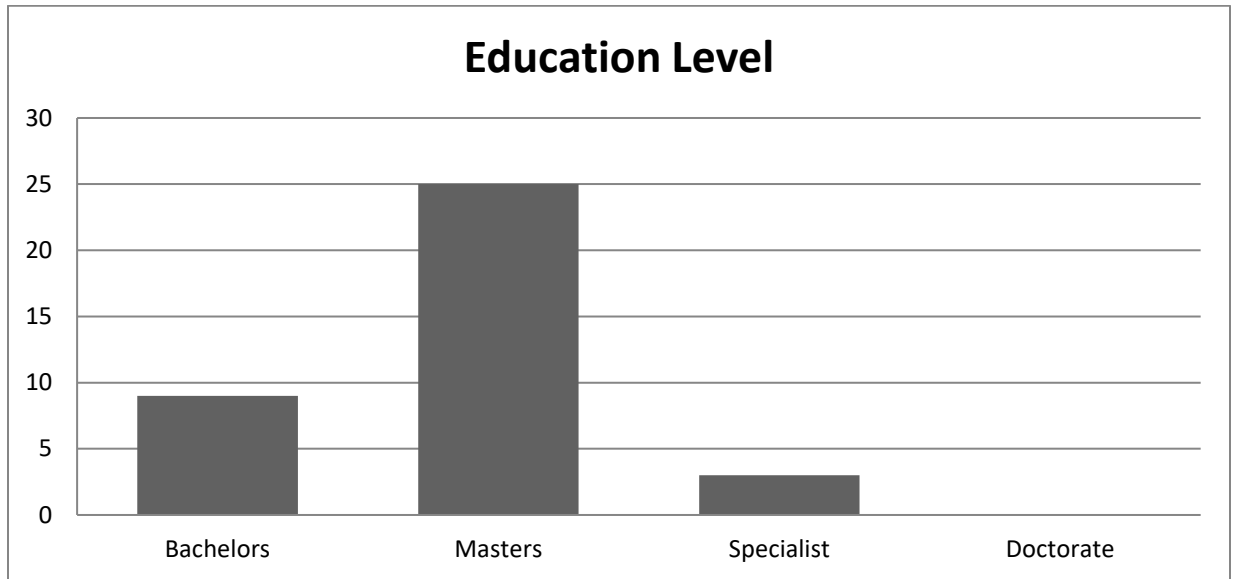


Figure 1. *Education level of participants.*

The results of the survey indicated that nearly 55% had 13 years or more of teaching experience, and less than 10% had less than three years of experience. These results could provide support for the hypothesis that administrative support had an influence on a special education teacher's perception of a satisfactory working environment. In addition, here again, 14 did not respond to this particular question about years of teaching experience.

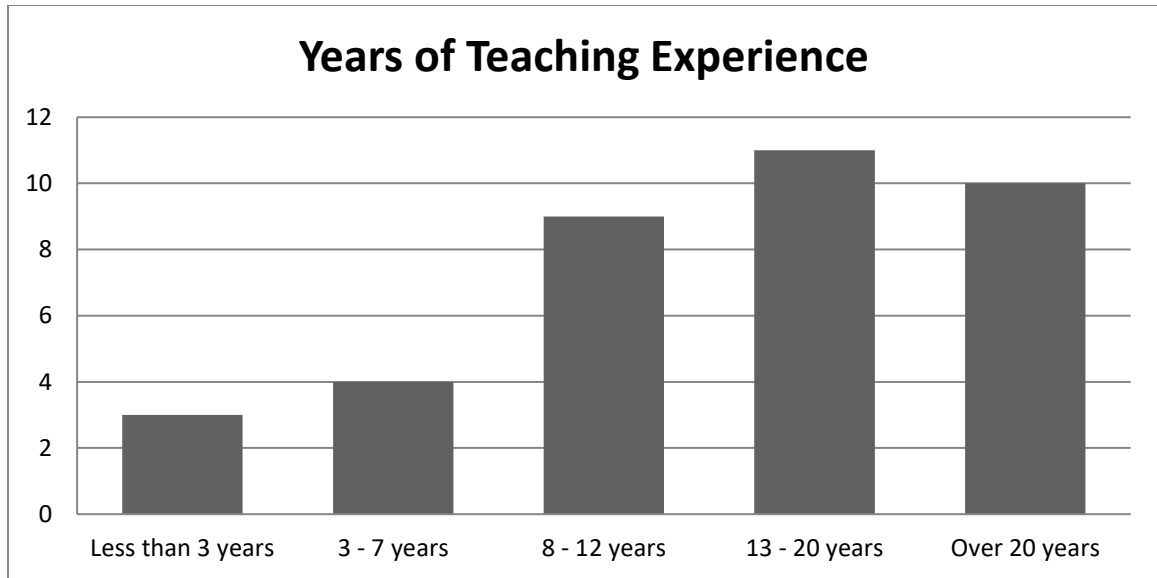


Figure 2. *Years of teaching experience of participants.*

The survey indicated that over 70% taught at the grade 6 level or above. These particular grade levels incorporate the concept of changing classes, which is not the case for the remaining 30%, of which students remained in the same classroom throughout the majority of the day. The 30% supervised students who sit in assigned seats all day and there was no need to take attendance every 50 minutes or so. Furthermore, the classroom was more orderly, since there was not a constant disruption every 50 minutes caused by students entering and exiting the room. The concept of staying in the same classroom with the same students all day could have influenced the special educator's concept of a satisfactory working environment. Again, 14 did not respond to the survey question regarding the grade taught. Perhaps the reason for this was that the administrators could determine who, in fact, may have responded to a particular question.

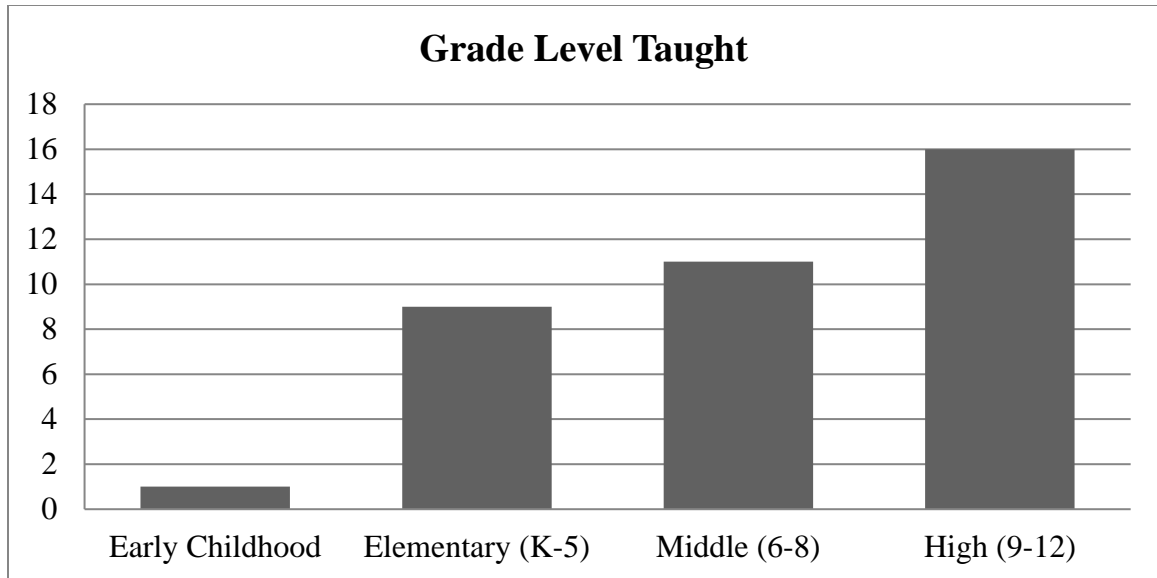


Figure 3. *Grade level taught.*

Upon completion of gathering the demographic information, a series of questions followed that pertained to that particular teacher's perception of job satisfaction.

How satisfied are you with the administrative support you receive?

In reviewing comments regarding the components of the special education department, it was apparent that the majority of the respondents believed that communication was the strongest. The special education teacher depended on others when it came time to write an IEP for a student on the caseload. The mandate that special needs students be placed in the least restrictive environment required that the special and general education teachers be able to readily communicate with each other regarding the progress of a particular student.

The input from the participants regarding what they perceived as the weakest component of the special education program aligned with information from the literature review. For example, there were complaints about not enough time to complete necessary paperwork for each student, administrator's knowledge of special education laws, and

inconsistency in the way administrators handled discipline of special needs students. These same concerns were present in the literature review.

The researcher discovered a few responses that were not discussed in any portion of the literature review. As a special education teacher, the researcher depended and respected input from those para-professionals who helped with students in the classroom. One of the respondents to the survey commented that there was a “lack of value and compensation for the para-professionals who are the backbone of any special education program.” As a special education teacher, the researcher believed in this so much that he invited para-professionals to IEP meetings to get their input. The first time the researcher did this, the individual was reluctant to attend, but when the researcher explained that the input was just as important as from a general education teacher, the para-professional attended the meeting. This made that para-professional feel like part of the team. After all, para-professionals should be because they very likely spend more one-on-one time with the students than the case manager. Another concern was the requirement of getting all special needs students ready for college. The respondent suggested alternatives like trade schools for construction, automotive repair, and cooking, as not everyone goes college.

The consensus for the ideal special educator program goes along with what was discovered during the literature review. The suggestions included more time to complete mandated paperwork, more training for administrators and general education teachers regarding special education law and a reduced caseload number. One respondent commented, “There is no ideal special education program, and there will never be.”

How satisfied are you with your working environment?

The literature review outlined that working conditions had a direct impact on the attitude of special educators. These working conditions ranged from lack of space to poor administrative support. Some problems regarding administrative support were covered earlier in the discussion included in this dissertation. As part of the survey, a request was made about the view of what additional resources were needed to create the ideal classroom. A few responses referred to buying food for the classroom to help those students who received 'free and reduced' lunches perform better in the classroom. Although the researcher could not find research to support this claim, there was information that supported the connection between being well fed and doing better in school (Whitney, 2014). Another teacher commented about having larger desks for those students that needed them. In addition to what has already been mentioned in this discussion, one suggested better reading programs for the lower grades would better prepare students for the classroom. The Institute of Reading Development (2014) emphasized the importance of instituting a reading program as early as the first grade. In doing this, the young student will be prepared by building the vocabulary and reading comprehension (Institute of Reading Development, 2014). One teacher commented about the lack of windows in the classroom and, how natural light is good for students. The Engineering Department at the University of Tulsa found that students in a ventilated classroom did significantly better academically than their peers in a non-ventilated classroom (University of Tulsa, 2014).

In the same survey, the participants were asked if they felt they were part of the school environment. One response referred to special educators as 'step-children.'

Another response indicated that they could not use Professional Learning Community (PLC) time to work with other special educators. Some of the responses were typical, in that the general education teachers felt that smaller classes meant less work. Another comment was that general educators really did not know special educators' responsibilities.

How satisfied were you with the mentoring program?

In reviewing the comments made about the strongest components of the mentor program it was very evident that there were mixed feelings about the respective programs. For example, one comment rated the mentoring program as excellent and provided many supports for the new teachers. Another comment indicated the school district did not have a mentoring program, yet the state of Missouri required one.

The comments regarding the weakest component of the mentor program came as a surprise. There was a comment that a mentee had a mentor who was on a 'Performance Improvement Plan'. A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) was a blueprint to help a struggling employee improve in performance (Indiana Universities, 2014). Another comment was about a new special education teacher having a mentor who was not a special educator. Even if the mentor was a prior special educator, the laws and paperwork change regularly, and it is hard enough for active special educators to keep current of the laws and paperwork changes. Of course, there was the comment of lack of time for the mentor/mentee to collaborate, which the researcher, himself, experienced at two different school districts.

In the area of suggested improvements, a participant suggested the need for a mentor program. Another suggested more time for mentor/mentee collaboration,

especially during the third quarter when the paperwork ‘gets crazy.’ The range of time went from no time to as much as six hours per week. One commented that only ‘seasoned teachers’ should be mentors.

Null Hypotheses

Null Hypotheses guiding the statistical comparison of percentages in this study were:

H₀₁: Special educators will not have perceptions of satisfactory administrative and general education support, as measured by questions 2 through 6 on a Likert-scale survey.

H₀₂: Special educators will not have perceptions of a satisfactory working environment, as measured by questions 10 through 14 on a Likert-scale survey.

H₀₃: Special educators will not have perceptions of a satisfactory mentoring program, as measured by questions 17 through 21 on a Likert-scale survey.

Survey Results

The survey results consisted of answering a 6-point Likert-type survey that included answering open-ended questions. Included in the survey was the option to participate in a personal interview with the researcher. Due to time constraints and the availability of those expressing an interest in participating in a personal interview, this was eliminated. Instead of a personal interview, I provided those interested with a list of questions to answer. The scale used in the survey ranked as ‘Not Very Satisfied’, ‘Somewhat Satisfied’, ‘Satisfied’, and ‘Very Satisfied’. The researcher then combined the results of ‘Not Very Satisfied’ and ‘Somewhat Satisfied’ to come up with a new category

of 'Not Satisfied'. This decision was based on not indicating that they were satisfied, therefore, they had a negative opinion of their respective school districts. The researcher then combined the results of 'Satisfied' and 'Very Satisfied' and named the new category 'Satisfied'. This decision was because the participants selected either 'Satisfied' or 'Very Satisfied', which indicated they were happy with their respective school districts.

Perceptions of administrative and general education support.

Table 1.

Survey Results for Questions 2-6

Question	Not Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Did Not Answer
2	2	13	17	13	10	23	11
3	1	13	14	16	10	26	11
4	4	13	17	17	6	23	11
5	8	20	28	10	2	12	11
6	4	15	19	16	5	21	11

The majority of the participants were satisfied with their administrative support according to the results displayed in Table 1. The results of question five indicated that special education teachers perceived a lack of knowledge about special education guidelines by the general education teachers. An *F*-test was conducted to compare variances between the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories. Null Hypothesis: There is no difference in variances when comparing the responses to the Not Satisfied and Satisfied categories.

Table 2.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
Mean	19.0	21.0
Variance	28.5	28.5
Observations	5	5
df	4	4
F	1.000	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0.500	
F Critical one-tail	6.390	

Note: Alpha = .05

Since the *F*-test value of 1.0 is not greater than the critical value of 6.39 (Table 2), the null hypothesis is not rejected. The variances for the two categories are not different. Upon completion of the *F*-test, a *t*-test for differences in means was conducted. Null Hypothesis: There will be no difference in the average number of respondents when comparing the categories of 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied'.

Table 3.

t-Test: Two Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
Mean	19.0	21.0
Variance	28.5	28.5
Observations	5	5
Pooled Variance	28.5	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	8	
t Stat	-0.592	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.570	
t Critical two-tail	2.306	

Note: Alpha = .05

The *t*-test value of -0.592 was between the positive and negative test critical values, ± 2.306 , and did not fall in the critical region; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. There was no difference in the average number of respondents when

comparing the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories in the area of satisfaction with administrative support.

2. How satisfied are you with your building level administrator's knowledge of special education guidelines?

The results of question two suggested that the majority of the survey participants were satisfied with the level of knowledge their respective building level administrators had regarding special education guidelines. Billingsley (2004) stated that lack of administrator support was a key factor in influencing a special educator to leave the profession. She went as far as to say that they were poorly trained in special education and the needs for the classroom.

3. How satisfied are you with your building level administrator's support of the special education program?

In question three, the survey suggested that there was support within the buildings by administrators. It found that nearly 65% of the respondents were satisfied with the level of support provided by their building level administrators. In a 2008 National Association of Elementary Principals report, it Duesbery and Werblow found that 70-80% surveyed listed administrative support as one of the top three, with salary and climate following. This research also addressed climate or working conditions.

4. How satisfied are you with the ways your building administrators addressed discipline issues involving students with special needs?

In regards to disciplinary actions for the special needs students, the results of question four suggests that 42% of the participants were not satisfied. If this number were

to decrease to indicate more were satisfied, would it also influence the results of questions two and three? This could also be related to administrator support.

5. How satisfied are you with the general education teachers' knowledge of special education guidelines?

The results for question five suggested that the general education teacher's knowledge of special education regulations needed improvement. This question could have had a direct impact on the results for the next question. For example, if general education teachers had a better understanding of special education regulations, then the special education teachers' perceptions of support would likely be higher.

6. How satisfied are you with the general education teachers' support for the special education program?

Those that answered question five as not being satisfied could have influenced the results of question six. Support and knowledge of special education could be construed as the same, yet they are not. Support is just following directions and helping out in the classroom, but knowledge is knowing how, and why, certain procedures were used with special needs students. An example would be using a reward system to enhance proper classroom behavior.

Perceptions of the current working conditions within your building.

The majority of the participants were satisfied with their working environment, according to the results displayed in Table 4. The exception would be questions 13 and 14, which dealt with the time allowed for writing lesson plans and IEPs.

Table 4.

Survey Results for Questions 10-14

Question	Not Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Did Not Answer
10	6	5	11	16	13	29	11
11	2	3	5	17	18	35	11
12	7	10	17	19	4	23	11
13	8	15	23	13	4	17	11
14	17	12	29	8	3	11	11

An *F*-test was conducted to compare the variances between the ‘Not Satisfied’ and ‘Satisfied’ categories. Null Hypothesis: There is not a difference in variances when comparing the responses to the ‘Not Satisfied’ and ‘Satisfied’ categories.

Table 5.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
Mean	17	23
Variance	90	90
Observations	5	5
df	4	4
F	1.000	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0.500	
F Critical one-tail	6.390	

Note: Alpha = .05

Since the *F*-test value of 1.0 is not greater than the critical value of 6.39 (Table 5), therefore the null hypothesis is not rejected. The variances for the two categories are not different. Upon completion of the *F*-test, a *t*-test for differences in means was conducted. Null Hypothesis: There will be no difference in the average number of respondents when comparing the categories of ‘Not Satisfied’ and ‘Satisfied’. Upon completion of the *F*-test, a *t*-test for differences in means was conducted. Null Hypothesis: There will be no

difference in the average number of respondents when comparing the categories of 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied'.

Table 6.

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
Mean	17.0	23.0
Variance	90.0	90.0
Observations	5	5
Pooled Variance	90.0	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	8	
t Stat	-1.000	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.347	
t Critical two-tail	2.306	

Note: Alpha = .05

The *t*-test value of -1.0 was between the positive and negative test critical values, ± 2.306 , and did not fall in the critical region; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. There was no difference in the average number of respondents when comparing the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories in the area of satisfaction with the working environment.

10. How satisfied are you with the size (physical dimension) of your classroom?

The researcher asked question 10 to determine if the classroom met the needs of the students and teachers. It found that nearly 75% were satisfied with their respective rooms. During the interview process, one teacher made a comment concerning no windows in the room where she taught. This could give the perception of a small room to the teacher and student. As previously mentioned, this could be related to the climate of the workplace.

11. How satisfied are you with the location of your classroom in relation to the general education classrooms?

The responses to question 11 were the strongest among this group of questions, at nearly 87% believing that their respective rooms were in a good location in regards to the general education classrooms. This question correlated with the requirement of special needs students to be in the least restrictive environment during their time at school.

12. How satisfied are you with the supplies provided by your school district for your classroom (textbooks, curriculum materials, etc.)?

Approximately 40% of those surveyed were not satisfied with the amount of supplies provided by the school district, according to question 12. One of the teachers that responded to the interview questions went to so far as to admit that she bought snacks for the students because she believed that students performed better academically when they were not hungry.

13. How satisfied are you with the time allocated by your administration for writing lesson plans?

Question 13 and the next question are related, since the topic is writing. The general educator and the special educator get the same amount of time to write lesson plans, which does not leave a lot of time for writing IEPs for the special needs students on a special education teacher's caseload. Of course, once a lesson plan is written it can be used every year, with only minor adjustments made to the outline. This could be the reason that question 13 had fewer teachers not satisfied than on question 14.

Those experienced special education teachers that have their lesson plans written do not need to worry and can devote the majority of their planning period to writing the IEPs for their respective caseloads.

14. How satisfied are you with the time allocated by your administration for writing Individualized Education Plans?

Nearly 73% of those special education teachers that answered question 14 were not satisfied with the time allotted to write IEPs. Furthermore, 58% of the special educators were not satisfied in the previous question involving the writing of lesson plans.

Perceptions of the mentoring program within your school district.

Table 7.

Survey Results for Questions 17-21

Question	Not Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Did Not Answer
17	9	9	18	16	4	20	13
18	10	7	17	17	4	21	13
19	7	7	14	15	9	24	13
20	8	7	15	17	6	23	13
21	10	9	19	15	4	19	13

The majority of the participants were satisfied with the mentoring program, according to the results displayed in Table 7. A few respondents indicated they did not participate in a mentor program. This may have caused them to answer negatively. An *F*-test was conducted to compare the variances between the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories. Null Hypothesis: There is not a difference in variances when comparing the responses to the Not Satisfied and Satisfied categories.

Table 8.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
Mean	16.6	21.4
Variance	4.3	4.3
Observations	5	5
df	4	4
F	1.000	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0.500	
F Critical one-tail	6.388	

Note: Alpha = .05

Since the *F*-test value of 1.0 is not greater than the critical value of 6.388, therefore the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is no difference in variance between the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories. Upon completion of the *F*-test, a *t*-test for differences in means was conducted. Null Hypothesis: There will be no difference in the average number of respondents when comparing the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories.

Table 9.

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
Mean	16.6	21.4
Variance	4.3	4.3
Observations	5	5
Pooled Variance	4.3	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	8	
t Stat	-3.660	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.006	
t Critical two-tail	2.306	

Note: Alpha = .05

The *t*-test value of -3.659 was not between the positive and negative test critical values, ± 2.306 , and did fall in the critical region; therefore, the null hypothesis was

rejected. There is a difference in the average number of respondents when comparing the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories in the area of satisfaction with the mentoring program. The number of respondents satisfied with the mentoring program was significantly larger than those that were not.

17. How satisfied are/were you with the design structure of the mentoring program?

In question 17, approximately 53% of the participants liked the design structure of the mentoring program they participated in as a new teacher. In the previous two sections of questions, 11 participants did not respond to the question. Thirteen did not respond to this question as well as questions 18 through 21. A possible explanation could be that the additional two did not participate in a mentoring program. This would go against the State of Missouri's mandate that new teachers participate in a mentoring program.

18. How satisfied are/were you with the implementation of the mentoring guidelines?

Nearly 45% of the respondents were not satisfied with their particular mentoring programs, according to the responses to question 18. This question may not have been clear and probably should have been included with the section discussing perceptions of administrative and general education support.

19. How satisfied are/were you with the relationship you had with your mentor?

Question 19 was crucial with regard to a new teacher, yet nearly 37% were not satisfied with their respective mentors. In an article written by Amos (2005), it was stated "Because approximately one third of the beginning teachers did not find formal mentoring programs helpful, care must be taken in the design and evaluation of these programs" (p. 14).

20. How satisfied are/were you with the knowledge obtained while in the mentor program?

In question 20, nearly two out of three were satisfied with the amount of knowledge gained from their mentors.

21. How satisfied are/were you with the support for the mentor program by your building level administrator(s)?

This is another question that could have been included with the section pertaining to perceptions of administrative and general education support. Question 21 showed that 50% were satisfied and 50% were not satisfied support from building level administrators.

Comparison with National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

The NCES conducted a U.S government-sponsored survey of teachers nationwide. The survey was conducted six times since its inception during the 1988-1989 school year (USDOE, 2007b). The survey consisted of the standard demographic questions, job-related questions, and covered both public and private schools. The first survey response population consisted of 2,386,500 teachers, and the most current survey had 3,380,300 that were surveyed (USDOE, 2010, p. 6). The results of the survey were divided among three categories; 'stayers', 'movers', and 'leavers'. The NCES survey results are outlined in Table 10.

Table 10.

National Center for Educational Statistics

All Teachers (Minus Special Education)								
	#	Numbers			Percent			Total*
Years	Teachers	Stayers	Movers	Leavers	Stayers	Movers*	Leavers*	
2000-01	2,669,900	2,542,200	231,000	221,400	95.2	8.7	8.3	17.0
2004-05	2,802,200	2,684,200	261,100	269,600	95.8	9.3	9.6	18.9
2008-09	2,983,810	2,854,900	255,700	269,800	95.7	8.6	9.0	17.6
Average					95.6	8.9	9.0	17.8

Note: Above information obtained from Teacher Attrition and Mobility (2008-09), National Center for Educational Statistics, US Department of Education, 2010

This research study will focus on the ‘movers’ and ‘stayers’, as they have a direct relationship to the research conducted. This research focused on whether the special education teachers were satisfied or unsatisfied with certain characteristics of their working environments. If a teacher were unsatisfied with working conditions, he or she would fall within the ‘mover’ and ‘leaver’ categories, in search of a better environment. This better working environment could be within the same school district or another district altogether. The purpose of this research was to determine the satisfaction of special education teachers within the participating school districts.

Table 10 indicates 17.6% of the teachers surveyed in 2008-2009 school year moved from their current positions or left the teaching profession. In the same period, the number of special education teachers in the same categories averaged 22.1% or 6.6% higher. The 2008-2009 survey suggested the following top three reasons for teachers leaving their current positions.

- (1) Opportunity for a better teaching assignment (subject area or grade level).
- (2) Dissatisfaction with support from administrators at previous school.
- (3) Dissatisfaction with workplace conditions at previous school. (USDOE, 2010, p. 12).

The above three reasons correlate with the following questions from my survey on job satisfaction.

- (1) How satisfied are you with the administrative support you receive?
- (2) How satisfied are you with your working environment?

A better teaching assignment could relate to better administrative support if the teacher perceived better support at another location within the same school district or another school district altogether.

Table 11.

National Center for Educational Statistics-Special Education

Special Education								
	#		Numbers			Percent		Total*
Years	Teachers	Stayers	Movers	Leavers	Stayers	Movers*	Leavers*	
2000-01	324,800	263,500	33,000	28,300	81.1	10.2	8.7	18.9
2004-05	412,700	325,600	45,900	41,300	78.9	11.1	10.0	21.1
2008-09	396,490	309,100	38,790	48,600	78.0	9.8	12.3	22.1
Average					79.3	10.4	10.3	20.7

Note: Above information obtained from Teacher Attrition and Mobility (2000-01, 2004-05, 2008-09), National Center for Educational Statistics, US Department of Education, 2010

Table 11 appears to include enough data available to suggest there was an increase in dissatisfaction among special education teachers from 2000 to 2009. The data indicated an increase of less than 1% for 'movers' between the 2000-2001 and 2004-2005

reporting periods. On the contrary, there was a decrease in ‘movers’ during the 2008-2009 school year. This could be a direct result of the state of the U.S. economy, as these teachers would not want to change jobs at this time. The data indicated the number of teachers leaving the profession nearly doubled during the same reporting period. The data suggested that nearly 1 in 5 teachers either moved from their current position or left the profession altogether.

In comparison to Table 10, it appeared that special education teachers were leaving their positions faster than were all other teachers combined. In the 2008-2009 reporting period, the number of special education teachers either moving from their current position or leaving the profession was nearly six and a half percentage points higher than the general education teachers in Table 10.

Open Ended Survey Questions

The survey presented the following open-ended questions to the participants to give the option of providing more specific explanations pertaining to their perceptions of job satisfaction.

In addition to what you already have, what additional resources are needed to create the ideal classroom for your special needs students?

In addition to the standard responses of needing more space, materials, and more time to complete paperwork there were numerous responses related to nutritional needs. One respondent indicated there was a correlation between student success in school and the need for nutrition to help the students concentrate. An article in the *Gainesville Times* suggests that hungry kids are prone to learning problems (Duncan, 2011). Another teacher indicated that many of the special needs students were also in the same

population as those receiving free and reduced lunches. Another article by the National Center for Children in Poverty did not link special needs children with free and reduced lunches, but did indicate that those children from a family for which income is at or below poverty would have difficulty academically (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014).

What do you consider the strongest component of the special education program?

The majority of the respondents indicated that communication was the strongest component in helping them provide a productive learning environment. For example, one indicated the ability to ‘bounce ideas off others’ when they were having difficulties with a particular student. Another indicated their knowledge of laws and procedures pertaining to special education. Yet, another teacher indicated a strong working relationship between regular education and special education teachers.

What do you consider the weakest component of the special education program?

This particular question generated many concerns about special education in general. Of course, there were those concerns about time to write IEPs, teacher to student ratios, money, and training. There were some concerns that did not fall within the common concerns. For example, one teacher indicated recognition for para-educators and their contributions to the classroom and the success of the students.

What improvements do you suggest for the ideal special education program?

This particular question generated many suggestions on how to create an ideal special education program. One respondent commented that, “There is no ideal special education program, and there never will be.” Some examples of improvements besides the usual ones regarding more time to complete paperwork, better training, and more

para-professionals included having a secretary to manage the scheduling of meetings and take care of the everyday functions within the special education department. In addition, it was suggested more time to collaborate with general education teachers and more training for the general education teachers, so they understand that just because a student acts up in class, it does not indicate that the student has behavioral issues and should be placed within the special education environment.

How much time did your mentor spend with you each week?

In this area, the range was anywhere from no time with the assigned mentor to 12 hours per week. One respondent indicated the mentor assigned had no knowledge of special education and therefore, sought advice from others. The state of Missouri had guidelines for a mentoring program, which outlines what should be included within a mentoring program. It indicates a minimum of three years' experience and adequate time for meetings between the mentor and mentee. Of course, this program needs support from the building administrator, as well as the central office.

What do you consider the weakest component of the mentor program?

The majority of the respondents indicated something about their respective mentor programs as being weak. Some of the surprising comments were a mentee having a mentor that was on a Performance Improvement Plan, another mentee having a mentor that was not a special education teacher, and yet another mentee had a mentor that was new to the school district and had no knowledge about the district in general. These issues were a direct contradiction of what the state of Missouri considers an ideal mentoring program.

What do you consider the strongest component of the mentor program?

Most of the respondents were satisfied with their experience within their respective mentoring program. A few commented that either they had a bad experience with the mentoring program or there was not a mentoring program available for them to seek out help from.

What improvements would you suggest for the mentoring program?

The only significant improvements suggested were more time for collaboration between the mentee/mentor and create a mentoring program. One respondent suggested that the mentors need to be professional and know what they are doing.

Interviews

The results for the interview questions (Appendix E) suggested that the teachers were happy with their positions, but had some concerns with their administrators and their administrators' knowledge of special education laws.

In the current state of affairs with the economy, what do see in the future for special education?

The results of this question varied for all three. One respondent said,

I see special educators taking on more in the way of school wide support. I think the educators who are certified in multiple areas of special education, as well as general education will be sought. Special education classes will not exist.

Students will be in the general education setting with access to a special educator. This would support her claim that special educators with multiple certifications in both special and general education will be sought to fill further vacancies. Another went so far as to say, "I do not see any changes in special education that are related to the economy.

Special education has not been funded for years. The movement of RTI and 504 teams began well before the economy collapsed.” Another special educator stated, “As an educator, I try to put my students’ needs first. In the future, I see special education students and teachers being overlooked, when it comes to their and our needs.”

How do you think special education students will be impacted by the proposed shift in responsibility from the federal to the state level?

The results of this question varied with all three respondents. The first response indicated, “I feel they will be left out of any decision.” Another response stated, “In reality there is no shift. Special education is a federally mandated program. Responsibility has always been at the local level.” The third respondent stated,

I see the states looking at the numbers set by the federal government and attempting to come up with a state acceptable number for teacher-to-special education student ratio. The federal ratio is not always beneficial to the student and it certainly doesn’t accurately reflect what happens daily.

If you could be the Secretary of Education for one day, what changes would you make to the special education requirements?

The first respondent stated,

I would not want the 22-point differential between the full scale IQ and the standard score on the testing. I would require more information and data that demonstrates the struggles or impacts. I would want written observations from the general staff. I would want students to be able to get access to strategies that directly impact their struggle.

This type of reporting was used at both of the school districts where the researcher worked. A 2007 *International Journal of Special Education* indicated that the IQ measurements were not effective ways to assess the cognitive abilities of special needs children (Crisp, 2007). Another responded by saying, “None, I would have no authority over the requirements for special education.” The remaining respondent said, “As Secretary of Education, I would modify any and all requirements in regards to special education, staff, testing and requirements.”

As a special educator, if you had the opportunity to go back in time, would you have chosen the current career path you have taken? Why?

The response for this question was ‘absolutely’ for all three. When asked why “Absolutely, I believe that special education is invaluable for the students”; “Absolutely, I love my job, my students and the impact I may have on any all of them.” Another respondent replied,

Absolutely, I love what I do. There are days that I question the motive of the government and I question how much knowledge some of the administration or board have about special education, but I love my job. I enjoy the kids and getting to see them progress. I love the challenge. It is never boring and I actually get a chance to connect with my students.

On a positive note; what has been your most memorable moment while working with special needs students?

The respondents indicated that all moments are memorable. One responded with, “My most memorable moment working with special needs students was when the parents and student called me a few years after I had the child, inviting me to their high school

graduation and celebration of his accomplishments.” Another responded by saying, “Every moment is memorable.” The remaining had many memorable moments and elaborated on a few of them. She stated,

I have a ton of memories. One is when the parents of a former student came to school to tell me that their child went into education because of me. Another was when the parents of a student wrote to the superintendent to express gratitude for framing a poem he wrote about his adoption.

Conclusions and Implications of Analysis of Subject Comments

The researcher found that communication was among the highest concerns, along with the general complaints of not enough time to write IEPs, inadequate facilities, and lack of knowledge of special education laws by the general education teachers and administrators.

In comparing the five different data sources, it was discovered that participants in three of them were not satisfied with the administrative support they received.

This section discusses other trends. A 2004 survey by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality indicated that improving teacher working conditions would not only reduce the turnover of teachers, but would increase student improvement (Hirsch, 2004). In a study conducted by the *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, researchers discovered that school principals had a significant influence on whether a teacher stayed or left the school district (Ghamrawi & Jammal, 2013). In addition, a 2011 thesis reported that administrators showed a lack of support, which had a direct impact on teachers leaving the profession. Additionally, it was suggested that

administrators did not have the necessary skills to adequately support special education teachers (Hanson, 2011).

Table 12.

Comparison of the Five Sources of Data

Research Question	MO	VA	GA	NCEI	NCES
# Participants/Return Rate (%)	51 (25)	115 (23)	279 (60)	1076 (43)	3,214,900
How satisfied are you with the administrative support you receive?	1,3,5	5	1,3,4,8	9	1
How satisfied are you with your working conditions?	3,4,5,8	5	3,4,8	9	10
How satisfied are you with your mentoring program?	5	9	9	9	9
Demographics					
Female Teachers	87.0%	82.6%	88.0%	84.0%	75.6%
Degrees					
Bachelor's	25.0%	32.1%	35.6%	44.0%	9
Master/Specialist	75.0%	64.3%	60.0%	55.0%	9
Doctorate	0.0%	3.6%	4.4%	1.0%	9
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Teaching Level					
Early Childhood	2.8%	3.5%	3.9%	48.0%	
Elementary School	24.3%	37.4%	41.5%		64.0%
Middle School	29.7%	33.0%	23.2%	52.0%	
High School	43.2%	26.1%	27.2%		30.0%
Multiple Levels			4.2%		6.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Teaching Experience (Years)					
Less than three	8.0%	10.5%	26.2%	26.0%	19.7%
Three to seven	10.0%	19.1%	21.9%	17.0%	26.9%
Eight to twelve	24.0%	23.5%	16.9%	17.0%	25.2%
Thirteen to twenty	29.0%	21.7%	20.8%	23.0%	
Twenty plus	29.0%	25.2%	14.2%	17.0%	28.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Key -

1) Lack of administrative support and knowledge of special education. 2) Excessive paperwork (IEP, Reports). 3) Inadequate planning time (lesson plans). 4) Satisfied with working conditions. 5) Lack of special education knowledge by general education teachers. 6) Satisfied with mentoring program. 7) Demands associated with IDEA. 8) No information. 9) Not satisfied. 10) Better salary.

Administrative support for special education teachers has been a concern for the past three decades. Once administrators start supporting special education teachers there will very likely be an increase in student achievement (Bore & Bore, 2009). In a study by a Virginia Polytechnic Institute dissertation student, it found a direct relation between administrative support and a teacher's job satisfaction. The same study also supported a teacher's desire to stay if there was adequate support from the building leaders (Tickle, 2008).

The literature review mentioned paperwork burden. However, it found that no one complained about the extensive paperwork, although three complained that they did not like their working conditions. This negative response could have been in reference to the amount of paperwork that went along with the special education teacher duties. In a 2004 report in *Principal* magazine, it was estimated that 10% of a special education teacher's day consisted of paperwork, and less than 50% of those teachers received any assistance in completing the burdening responsibility (Klein, 2004).

Two of the districts had complaints about not enough planning time, which could be construed as working conditions as well. A 1952 article in *Educational Leadership* discussed the need for adequate planning time for teachers (Carey, 1952). This same problem still existed over six decades later in the classroom, with far more responsibilities placed upon the teacher. In a 2013 victory for the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association, the elementary and middle school teachers increased their planning time by 50% (Flannery, 2014).

Of the five data sources, two were concerned with the amount of knowledge general education teachers had in regards to special education laws and practices. This should be a concern of every school district, due to the liabilities placed on the school district if an IEP is not followed or understood by the general education teacher (The Educator's Room, 2014). The web site, www.serge.ccsso.org, is a source of information for general education teachers who have questions pertaining to special education laws. The national survey expressed concerns about the salary, but it was not a concern with the other participants of the research. According to a study by the NCES, the national average for a teacher's salary for 2010-2011 was \$56,069 (USDOE, 2012a), which was \$10,688 more than the state of Missouri's average (Missouri National Education Association, 2011, p. 2).

The participating school districts in Missouri had the highest percentage of advanced degrees, but no one admitted to having a doctorate. This may be due to the limited number of teachers who actually completed such a degree and the ability of administrators being able to learn who participated in the research.

Again, this research had the highest percentage of high school teachers who participated, along with the highest percentage of teachers with 13 or more years of teaching experience. A teacher having 13 or more years of teaching experience could indicate they enjoyed their profession. Unfortunately, the survey was not designed to learn if the teacher were with their current districts for this length of time.

Those who participated in a mentoring program were satisfied, but not everyone had the opportunity to participate in such a program. In a 2004 report by the Education Commission of the States, that involved ten different studies, found that mentoring did in

fact help in retaining teachers, thus reducing the costs of recruiting new teachers (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2014). In a 2010 dissertation regarding mentoring, the author claimed mentoring does in fact increase teacher retention. Furthermore, they needed support by the building principal (Hill-Carter, 2010).

A report written by Barlin (2010) for *Education Week* said three factors helped in building successful mentoring programs. These factors included the right teacher for mentoring the new teacher, aligned support of instructional needs and Principal support (Barlin, 2010). For example, a teacher that has the experience and positive attitude to work as a mentor and be available to support the new teacher. Instructional needs of the teachers to include classroom materials, adequate classroom size, and professional development. The area of principal support has been a concern for all teachers. This support should be in the way of providing adequate time to write IEPs, write lesson plans, and provide classroom support.

Summary

In the literature review, there was considerable concern about lack of support by administrators and lack of time to complete paperwork, along with concerns about mentoring programs. The research provided mixed feelings about administrator support, but it appeared to still be a continuing problem. Of course, this could be linked to not having adequate time to take care of the required paperwork. During this research, it was found that lack of time to complete paperwork was still a concern. Some of the participants of the research indicated they were not satisfied with their mentoring program, or they did not participate in such a program. The State of Missouri required all new teachers to participate in a mandatory two-year mentoring program in order to obtain

full certification (MODESE, 2015). It appeared that some teachers were not getting this requirement when hired. Based on the literature review, this lack of mentoring could have a direct impact on the success of a teacher.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine the perceptions of characteristics of a satisfactory working environment for special education teachers within two school districts located in the Midwest. A mixed methods approach was used to learn what connections existed between the variables measured. The literature review supported this study, due to examination of the continuous number of special education teachers leaving the classroom, or education in general, due to dissatisfaction.

Results of this research was compared to the results of four similar studies, which gathered data through survey. The surveys from studies conducted in Georgia and Virginia used the same instrument, which made the comparison much easier. In addition, the results were compared to a 2011 report by the National Center for Education Information (NCEI) and the 2004-2005 Teacher Follow-up Survey by the NCES. In these studies, the participants also answered a Likert style survey and were given the option of providing further input through an interview.

In this chapter, the researcher summarized the findings of the research and made recommendations for future research. The results of the study indicated that problems still existed within the three areas of concern outlined in the literature review, which were lack of administrator knowledge, poor working conditions, and lack of or inferior mentoring programs

Research Questions:

Research questions guiding this study were:

Question 1: What are special educators' perceptions of administrative support received?

Question 2: What are special educators' perceptions of the working environment?

Question 3: What are special educators' perceptions of mentoring programs?

Hypotheses:

Hypotheses applied to data for analysis were:

H₁: Special educators will have perceptions of satisfactory administrative and general education support, as measured by questions 2 through 6 on a Likert-scale survey.

H₂: Special educators will have perceptions of a satisfactory working environment, as measured by questions 10 through 14 on a Likert-scale survey.

H₃: Special educators will have perceptions of a satisfactory mentoring program, as measured by questions 17 through 21 on a Likert-scale survey.

Research Questions and Hypotheses Discussion

The first question related to administrative support and the results of the survey indicated that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the support they received from their administrators. There was a concern of the lack of knowledge the general education teachers had about special education guidelines. Analysis of data for Null Hypothesis 1 determined that there was no significant difference when comparing the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories; therefore, the Alternate Hypothesis was not supported, and there was no significant difference between those who were satisfied and those who were not, with regard to administrative support.

The second question related to working conditions and the results of the survey indicated that the majority of the participants were satisfied with their working environment. There was a concern about lack of time to write IEPs and lesson plans. This concern was also present in the literature review, as well. Analysis of data for Null Hypothesis 2 showed that there was no significant difference when comparing the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories; therefore, the Alternate Hypothesis was not supported, and there was no significant difference between those who were satisfied and those who were not, with regard to working environment.

The third question, related to participation in a mentoring program, had mixed results regarding the respondents' thoughts about their respective programs. Some commented they had an excellent mentoring program and then some commented they did not have one, or their particular mentor was on a Performance Improvement Plan or had no experience in special education. Analysis of data for Null Hypothesis 3 indicated there was a significant difference when comparing the 'Not Satisfied' and 'Satisfied' categories; therefore, the alternate hypothesis was supported, and special education teachers were significantly satisfied with their mentoring programs. .

Implications

The results of this research suggests that administrator support within the special education profession remains similar to that reported by Billingsley (2004). Billingsley (2004) found that teachers may leave the profession due to lack of administrator support. There was concern that some administrators had little training in the area of special education, or had little knowledge in working with special educators. Some administrators only received training concerning special education requirements during

their preparation for initial administrator certifications. A lack of experience in the area could lead to dissatisfaction for the special education professional.

Following this study, it could be perceived that working conditions are still a problem, based on input from the participants and the researcher's own personal experience in the classroom setting. When working for a rural school as a special educator the researcher was assigned to a room that measured approximately 12 feet by 12 feet. Class size ranged from a few students to as many as ten, in addition to the paraprofessional assigned to my classroom. This particular setting was in the basement of the school, with the rest of the special education classes. It appeared that the special needs students were intentionally segregated from the general population. It was not the ideal setting for students who had emotional and/or behavioral conditions. The students should have been placed among the general education students, to help them with their interpersonal skills. In other words, these students can learn how to interact with others by observing those around them.

This research suggests that an excellent mentoring program is essential. The researcher's experiences with mentoring within two different school districts were less than desirable. For example, while working for the rural school district, the mentor assigned decided that she did not want to be a mentor anymore, approximately two months into the school year. The decision was not related to the mentee; it was due to the amount of paperwork she had as a case manager, teacher, and mentor. A mentor should be assigned additional time to complete the necessary paperwork, as opposed to the standard one planning period per day. It was overwhelming for her, with no additional time, to complete the required documentation that was required as a mentor. The

researcher eventually received another mentor, but she was located outside the building in a trailer, which made it difficult to seek out advice. The second school district the researcher worked for never assigned a mentor in the same building. This was due to the researcher's prior work experience as a special educator. The work experience amounted to one full year as a special education teacher, of which a mentor was assigned for half of the school year. This school district assigned a facilitator, who had the responsibility of monitoring/tutoring numerous new teachers to the school district in many different buildings. The only time she was available was at training seminars and occasionally when she was in the building monitoring another teacher's classroom. She never actually monitored the researcher's classroom or provided any type of input.

The respondents of this research either participated in a mentor program or they did not. Those who did had nothing negative to say about the programs they participated in during their first years of teaching. Those that did not participate indicated that it would have been nice to have one.

This study included data to support five major areas necessary to provide support for a special educator to be successful. These are in alignment with Mason and White's (n.d.) research: (1) assistance in writing IEPs, (2) curriculum and teaching, (3) forms and paperwork, (4) behavior management, and (5) help with problem students. These concerns are still valid at the time of this writing, based on input from participants of the study survey. The first area of concern with the respondents was that the amount of time allocated to write IEPs was not adequate, and could be interpreted as assistance in writing IEPs. Some suggested that a secretary would be helpful to schedule meetings and disseminate paperwork. Overall, it appeared that nothing changed since the 1952

Educational Leadership article by Carey regarding teachers needing adequate planning time. Respondents to this research supported the second area of concern, in that special needs students should be exposed to more vocational skills versus academic. This belief was supported by the inability of special needs students falling short of expectations in standardized testing, which was detrimental in the overall performance of the school district, as seen in years recent to this writing, where school districts lost credibility. Mason and White's (n.d.) third area of concern covered forms and paperwork, which could be included with the first concern. There was a standardized format for IEPs, yet there was no standardized way to write IEPs. If there were a standard way to write these, it would make transferring of students between school districts much easier, which ultimately could reduce the amount of paperwork. Behavior management, the fourth concern for Mason and White (n.d.) was an area in which respondent's to this research indicated administrators lacked experience, as well as concerns that they did not discipline appropriately those special needs students who were disruptive. Finally, the fifth area of concern about help with problem students could be included with the fourth concern, if it is related to discipline. It could also be related to students with specific learning disabilities. For example, how does a special education teacher instruct one of these students in algebra? This relates back to concern number two about curriculum and teaching.

The IEP was the blueprint for a special needs student's education. This particular document could get a school district and educator into trouble if not adhered to as written. As a new special educator, the researcher spent a considerable amount of time writing and re-writing IEPs to adequately provide the special instruction needed for a particular

student. It became necessary for the researcher to take the work home with just to keep up with an abundance of paperwork.

In the research, it suggested that the special education department have a secretary to contact parents and colleagues to set up IEP meetings and to handle paperwork. This would be a great help, but to take it further the secretary could be the contact for the parents, the person that copies and disseminates the IEPs to parents, and staff. Of course, this would cost more money, and depending on the size of the special education department it could require more than one secretary, due to the volume of phone calls and appointments needed throughout the school year. Anyone familiar with a special education program would ask, what the para-educators are doing with their time. They would still be working with the students as needed, and with the reduced workload, the students may show an increase in grades, which could reflect positively on the end of year standardized testing.

The secretary would free up both the special educator and para-educator to allow more time to work with the students. Furthermore, this would be beneficial for the special educator in making more time to evaluate the students for their specific needs. In addition, there would be more time to write the IEPs.

The state mandated what was to be included in the curriculum, and the school districts needed to adhere to these requirements. Yes, there needed to be minimum standards to insure that the students get an adequate education. However, not all students are created equally, therefore there needs to be adjustment made to the curriculum to help these special students be successful. These special students have unique characteristics that hinder their learning abilities, of which the prescribed curriculum may not work with

some of these students. Hence, comes the need to make adjustments in teaching the course content. The adjustments can be as simple as having the student isolated from others while testing, to working one-on-one with the student to insure comprehension.

These are special needs students, and why should they be held to the same standards as those in the general education classes? If they could keep up with those students, then there would be no need for special education. Special needs students may have one or multiple characteristics that hinder their abilities to learn. This is why those general educators should be aware of different teaching styles for special students. The federal guidelines were that the special students needed to be in the least restricted environment; yet, the general educators had a basic understanding of special education requirements. This also applied to the school administrators, who may have a basic knowledge of special education. This basic knowledge makes it difficult for the administrator to help a struggling special education teacher in improving his or her classroom instruction, thus increasing the chance of a special educator leaving the classroom either voluntarily or due to a school district not renewing a contract. It appeared that both general educators, as well as building administrators needed more training in regards to working with special needs students.

In the literature review, the researcher discussed how a superintendent worked with a software development company to design an acceptable IEP program. Both of the school districts that participated in my research used similar programs to create the IEPs. Yet, there were still complaints about not having enough time to write IEPs within these two school districts.

The IEPs were extensive and required constant adjustments; therefore, these programs were a necessity. They may not reduce the amount of paperwork, but they make the paperwork involved in writing the IEP much easier. As previously mentioned, a secretary would be a beneficial addition to a special education program.

Another concern about classroom management or working conditions was the need for more training on how to control disruptive behavior, as well as disciplining those responsible for such behavior. Some participants said that administrators were not consistent when it came to disciplining those special needs students who were disruptive. This could be due to the potential amount of paperwork involved to determine if the disruptive behavior was related to the special needs student's disability.

This disruptive behavior not only takes valuable time away from teaching, it also deprives the other students of an appropriate education. As a parent, this was a concern of mine, as he believed that his children were not getting an appropriate education. Ultimately, when he started to work with special needs students he developed a different perception of these problem students.

The previous paragraph discussed those students who were disruptive, but not those students who were considered problem students. Albeit, they could be one in the same. As an educator, the researcher did have problem students in the classroom. When talking with special educators about problem students, he learned that one way to control them was to develop a rapport with the students and family. This could be a problem with the constant turnover of special educators, due to burnout from excessive paperwork, lack of administrative support, and poor working conditions.

Recommendations

There was a concern that administrators lacked adequate knowledge about special education, yet the data in Table 1 did not support this. Administrators, such as school principals in charge of special educators be required to be certified in special education and attend training to keep them current on the needs of the special needs students. This could be accomplished by offering a university-level certificate program. There should be an increased interest in providing more time for teachers for the preparation of IEPs and lesson plans. This was outlined as a problem in the literature review, as well as in the research. The data in Table 2 suggested that teachers lacked the appropriate amount of time to write lesson plans and IEPs. Of course, maybe the problem was not in the amount of time to write lesson plans and IEPs, but in the correct way to write them. The university could offer a class in IEP writing that is based on the recommendations outlined by the state. The state of Missouri provided outlines for a mentoring program, and in this research it was learned that one school district did not have a mentoring program. My recommendation is for school districts to implement one to assist those special educators that need assistance. When I worked in law enforcement and chose to become a Field Training Officer (FTO), it was mandated by the state that I attend a state approved FTO program for a week. An FTO is like a mentor for a new police officer that just graduated from the police academy. This program covered evaluating police officers during their training, legal aspects, and responsibilities of an FTO. The university could offer such a program for mentors of special education teachers. The program could include subjects like classroom management, special education law, and writing lesson plans. The university could also offer classes on writing IEPs based on the state's

recommendations. In doing this, it would streamline the IEPs throughout the state; thus making it easier for students to transfer to other school districts. It could eliminate the need to rewrite an IEP if the receiving school district agreed on what came from the previous district.

The following recommended questions work as topics for future studies. How does the federal government influence how local schools are managed? How are local school districts and state education departments impacted by federal funding? According to Data First (2014), the federal government provided approximately 8% of the funding needed for the state's school districts. Is this small percentage worth losing control of the school district?

Summary

After looking at my research and comparing it to that of others through my literature review, it appeared that little has changed in the way of job satisfaction issues pertaining to special education. Although some of the results of my research suggest special education teachers are satisfied with their working conditions, there were still those that had concerns with administrators, working environment, and mentoring programs. The literature review, along with my research suggests that there are still concerns about administrators and general educators lacking knowledge about special education. There were comments from survey participants about working in rooms with no windows or natural light. One respondent indicated there was not a mentor program at the school district where employed. If this was true, then this particular school district should implement one, based on the needs of the new teachers.

Although it appeared that there has been little change for special education teachers, there were some positive comments from participants of this research. These comments indicated that seeing a special needs student graduate outweighed the negative aspects of special education, such as paperwork, lack of administrative support, and working conditions.

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Appendix A: Letter to School Districts

I am seeking your help in completing my research project that involves the turnover of special education teachers. I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University with a background in special education. I have taken this school year off to finish my research on this topic.

The topic will involve determining the rate of turnover, if any, of special education teachers within the five St. Charles County school districts. The ultimate goal is to learn if there is an issue regarding turnover and to determine where the special educators are going after they leave the special education classroom. Are they going to the general education class, another district, or are they leaving the education field? I am seeking the following information to start my study; total number of certified special and general education teachers in the school district to include central office staff. I am asking for the general educators in order to determine how many transferred from special education classroom to the general education classroom.

The confidentiality of the teachers who take part in the research will be protected and the data produced from the online survey type questionnaire will be only assessable by me. The plan is to have the participants go to a predesigned survey link, which will be provided later, and have them complete the survey. To insure the validity of the participants and insure that they only answer the survey one time, I would like a list of their school e-mail addresses. There will be a consent form at the beginning reminding the participants that the survey is voluntary and all data will be confidential. The survey will be designed for all certified educators in the district to participate. There will be an option for teachers to opt-out even after they have started the survey. If they choose not to participate or are not certified in special education, they will be taken to the end of the survey and will not have the opportunity to give input. Once the survey is completed, all records of their e-mail addresses will be shredded. I will provide to those districts that participate in the research project a copy of the final project as soon as it is approved by the university. There will be no identifying information, just data from the online survey. If you have any questions, please contact me via the above e-mail or phone number. The results of the research will be beneficial in determining if there is a problem with special education teacher turnover and if there isn't, what is being done right to keep these unique teachers in the classroom?

I thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
David J. McCauley, USAFR, Retired

Appendix B: Survey

This survey was presented to participants via the online service called “Survey Monkey”.

1. Consent

The following survey is to be voluntarily completed and the initial responses will not be available to anyone other than the researcher. The results of the survey will be analyzed and presented in a narrative form within my research paper. By participating in the survey, you agree that you are currently working in special education. I realize there has been many changes due to budget constraints within the education profession.

*Do you agree with the above consent?

- Yes
- No

2. Classroom Support

This portion of the survey is to learn your perceptions of administrative and general education support.

- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

*How satisfied are you with your building level administrator’s knowledge of special education guidelines?

- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

*How satisfied are you with your building level administrator’s support of the special education program?

- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

*How satisfied are you with the ways your building administrators address discipline issues involving students with special needs?

- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

*How satisfied are you with the general education teachers’ knowledge of special education guidelines?

- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

*How satisfied are you with the general education teachers' support for the special education program?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*What do you consider the strongest component of the special education program? (Be specific)

*What do you consider the weakest component of the special education program? (Be specific)

*What improvement(s) do you suggest for the ideal special education program? (Be specific)

3. Working Conditions

This portion of the survey is to learn your perceptions of the current working conditions within your building.

*How satisfied are you with the size (physical dimension) of your classroom?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*How satisfied are you with the location of your classroom in relation to the general education classrooms?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*How satisfied are you with the supplies provided by your school district for your classroom (textbooks, curriculum materials, etc.)?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

How satisfied are you with the time allocated by your administration for writing lesson plans?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*How satisfied are you with the time allocated by your administration for writing Individualized Education Plans?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*How much of your own money do you spend on classroom supplies each year?

- Zero to \$100 \$101 to \$200 \$201 to \$300 More than \$300

*In addition to what you already have, what additional resources are needed to create the ideal classroom for your special needs students?

4. Mentor Support

*How satisfied are/were you with the design structure of the mentoring program?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*How satisfied are/were you with the implementation of the mentoring guidelines?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*How satisfied are/were you with the relationship you had with your mentor?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*How satisfied are/were you with the knowledge obtained while in the mentor program?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*How satisfied are/were you with the support for the mentor program by your building level administrator(s)?

- Not very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

*What do you consider the strongest component of the mentor program? (Be specific)

*What do you consider the weakest component of the mentor program? (Be specific)

*What improvements would you suggest for the mentoring program? (Be specific)

*How much time did your mentor spend with you each week?

5. Accepted by General Education staff

*What factors made you feel this way?

6. Demographic Information

*Gender

- Male Female

*Current degree level

- Bachelors Masters Specialist Doctorate

*Years of teaching experience

- Less than 3 3 to 7 8 to 12 13 to 20 over 20

*Type of certification

- Special Education Special and General Education

*How was your special education certification obtained?

- Through coursework at the university level
 Through an alternative method such as taking the Praxis

*What level of school do you teach?

- Early childhood Elementary (K-5) Middle (6-8) High (9-12)

*What school district do you work for?

- Francis Howell Orchard Farm Other

*Please use the space below to list additional reasons of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your current special education position. Do not include any identification information.

*Would you be willing to participate in an interview to clarify your answers?

- Yes No

7. Interview Option

*Please provide the following information if you would be willing to participate in an interview later. The information obtained through the interview will be used to support the survey and no identifying information will be published.

Name:

E-mail address:

Phone number:

*When would be the best time to contact you?

8. Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. I know as an educator you are busy with all of your everyday duties.

9. Non-Participation

Would you like to return to the “Consent Page” and change your answer?

- Yes No

10. Good Bye

Appendix C: Letter to Teachers

Dear Special Educator:

I am writing to request a few minutes of your time in completing an on-line Special Education Teacher Survey, which will help me determine if there is an issue with the turnover of Special Educators within the St. Charles County school districts. The survey is strictly on a voluntary basis and I have been in contact with your school district's Superintendent seeking permission to have your participation in the survey. I am a current special educator and finishing my Doctorate in Education at Lindenwood University. I plan to conduct a study entitled; *Special education teacher perceptions of the characteristics of a satisfactory working environment*. The purpose of the study is to determine what makes special educators leave the classroom and what keeps them in the classroom. You have been chosen to participate in the study either because you are currently teaching special education or had taught special education in the past.

I appreciate your participating in the study and I can assure you that all information obtained through the on-line survey or any interviews will be of strict confidence. Again, I remind you that your participation is strictly on a voluntary basis and the school district had no input in the design of the survey. The survey has been used in two previous doctoral researches in other parts of the country. With your participation in the survey, it will help in completing my study. As you well know, it is hard to recruit, train, and retain special educators in today's classrooms.

Once the survey is completed and all data is reported to me, it will be analyzed to see if there are any obvious patterns that hinder the ability of keeping special educators in the classroom. There will be no individual results reported and the survey will be handled through an on-line service specializing in collecting data and keeping the participants confidential. After analyzing the data, it will be put in narrative form as a chapter in the dissertation. This information will be shared with the members of my dissertation committee as part of the process of completing the dissertation process. Once the final project is approved by the university, the data will be made public in hopes of helping those in charge of recruiting, training, and retaining special educators make better hiring decisions. I believe this is very important to all educators and administrators. The results could possibly help reduce the turnover of special educators and increase the chances of those students that depend on us every day in the classroom.

There are no potential risks in completing the survey, furthermore, if you know of special educators that have left your school district please forward this link to them so they can participate in the study.

Thank you,
David J. McCauley

Appendix D: Permission Letters



Orchard Farm R-V School District

2165 Highway V
St. Charles, Missouri 63301
Telephone: (636) 250-5000 • Fax: (636) 250-5444
www.ofd.k12.mo.us

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Marianne Doll, EdS
Director of Special Services

November 5, 2009

Mr. McCauley,

The Orchard Farm R-5 School District will allow you to contact district professional staff via e-mail for the purpose of conducting your doctoral research if the following conditions are met:

- The purpose of the research is clearly stated.
- The request states that participation is voluntary.
- A disclaimer states that the research is not associated with Orchard Farm School District.

Again, best of luck with your doctoral research!

Sincerely,

Marianne Doll, Ed.S.
Director of Special Services



Appendix E: Interview Questions

1. In the current state of affairs with the economy, what do you see in the future for special education?
2. How do you think special education students will be impacted by the proposed shift in responsibility from the federal to the state level?
3. If you could be the Secretary of Education for one day, what changes would you make to the special education requirements?
4. As a special educator, if you had the opportunity to go back in time, would you have chosen the current career path you have taken? Why?
5. On a positive note; what has been your most memorable moment while working with special needs students?

Vitae

David McCauley graduated from Miramar College in San Diego California with an Associate in Criminal Justice. He worked for nearly ten years as a police officer in Southern California and Saint Charles, Missouri. During his tenure as a police officer, he obtained a Bachelors' in Public Administration from National University in San Diego, California in 1989. In 1991, he received a full scholarship from the John F. Duffy Foundation for his leadership skills in law enforcement. This award was normally given to sergeants and above, and he had not attained that rank yet. He obtained his first Master's Degree in Organizational Management from the University of Phoenix in 1992. In addition to working as a police officer, he continued his military career in the U.S. Naval Reserve and Air Force Reserve. While working in the Naval Reserve he held the collateral duty as the Command Instructor. Additionally, he taught at the Police Academy as well as working as a Field Training Officer (FTO). The FTO position is equal to a mentor in the education field. He left the law enforcement profession in 1997.

In January 2002, he started his own lawn care business in the Saint Charles, MO area. Since this was a seasonal occupation, he started to work as a substitute teacher within the local school district during the winter months. He worked primarily full-time within the special education classroom. He had developed a relationship with many teachers and consistently had requests from them to work in their classrooms in their absence. One administrator asked him to work as a substitute teacher for an entire semester at the alternative high school. This is when he started to take an interest in working in the education profession. He had numerous teachers and administrators suggest this. He received a Master's in Teaching from Lindenwood University in August

2006. He was later certified with the state of Missouri to teach Business and Social Science for grades 9-12 and Special Education (Cross-Category) K-12. He worked as the In-School-Suspension Teacher during the 2006-2007 school year at one of the local middle schools of the Francis Howell School District. In the 2007-2008 school year, he taught World and United States History to high school special needs students at a rural high school. During the 2008-2009 school year, he worked for the Saint Louis Special School District teaching World History to special needs students. His contract was not renewed with the Special School District, but the school administrator invited him to work as a substitute teacher for the school district. The first semester of the 2009-2010 school year, he worked as a long-term substitute teacher for the middle school of the Orchard Farm School District. In May 2010, he received a Master's in Educational Administration from Lindenwood University. He worked as an "on-call" substitute teacher from January 2010 to March 2011, when he was offered a position with the Department of Veteran's Affairs. The Department of Veteran's Affairs has its own education division and it was his plan to eventually transfer to that division.

He plans to apply at various universities in the Miami, Florida area once the Doctorate of Educational Administration is conferred. He may also seek employment with the Broward County (Florida) School District to work in the central office.