Implementation and Evaluation of a School-Based Retention Program for Exceptional Student Education Teachers

by
Kanteasa E. Rowell

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Fischler School of Education and Human Services
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
2006

Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Kanteasa E. Rowell under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Fischler School of Education and Human Services and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Linda Mallinson, EdD Committee Chair	Date
Linda Gaughan, PhD Committee Member	Date
Maryellen Maher, PhD Executive Dean for Research and Evaluation	Date

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I have to thank my heavenly Father. Without Him, none of this would have been possible.

I would like to thank Dr. Linda Mallinson, my chair, for all of her guidance and support throughout the dissertation process. I would like to thank Dr. Linda Gaughan for her assistance as the reader on my committee. I would like to thank each professor who molded my thought process and shaped my writing style.

I am grateful to both my formative and summative committees for providing invaluable support and ideas. Twyla Hall, Katherin Williams, and Noel Person provided me with more encouragement and support than they realize. Ernest Swift and John Copeland are thanked for the leadership roles and opportunities that they placed upon me. Their guidance and expertise have shaped and will continue to transform leaders in the field of education.

I would like to thank the respondents who participated in the study. Without their support, my project would not have been possible to complete.

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Mary Rowell, and my son, Nathaniel William Miller. They loved me unconditionally and were sources of strength throughout the entire process. I appreciate Nathaniel's being patient with Mommy each time she said to him, "I am working right now, Nathaniel; I can't play." To Mom, I express thanks for her continued support. I am so thankful to have such a loving mother. I express thanks to her for spending quality time with Nathaniel while I completed my dissertation. I love these two with all my heart. I express thanks for everything I can never repay them--for all that they have done for me.

Abstract

Implementation and Evaluation of a School-Based Retention Program for Exceptional Student Education Teachers. Rowell, Kanteasa E., 2006: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Fischler School of Education and Human Services. Teacher Turnover/Faculty Mobility/Teacher Transfer/Teacher Placement/Special Education

The purpose of this applied dissertation was to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that lead to retention of exceptional student education (ESE) teachers and what role leaders play at the school level in influencing quality teachers to remain in the field of education. The attrition rate of ESE teachers nationwide grows as school officials attempt to fill vacant ESE instructional positions. The site school, which was located in a school district in Florida, was no exception. Specifically, the project explored factors related to the attrition rate of ESE teachers in general as well as specifically at the site school. It explored effective retention programs and detailed the design of a long-term support-retention program that was implemented at the site school to retain ESE teachers. The researcher selected action research to carry out the project. Qualitative action research allowed the researcher to discover patterns that have led to the high level of teacher attrition at the site school as well as other schools. The analysis took on a logico-inductive process.

The ESE teachers actively participated in the program and identified ways to improve the program as well as additional needs of the ESE teachers. The ESE department teachers were openly expressive in stating the needs and wants of ESE teachers. The 2004-2005 school year ended with no ESE teachers leaving the department. The 2005-2006 school year began with all ESE teachers returning. Five weeks into the 2005-2006 school year, 1 ESE teacher left the site high school and the school district and became self-employed. Sixty-five percent of the site school's ESE teachers were at the comfortable level in their knowledge and ability in some areas of ESE policies and procedures. As few as 15% of the ESE teachers were at the comfortable level in their knowledge and ability in other areas of policies and procedures. The ESE teachers requested training in several areas. The researcher recommended and provided developmental training and mentors for the ESE teachers at the site school. The site school ESE teachers participated in sessions that described and provided practice on completing ESE documents.

The evaluation of the retention program revealed that the training and supportive services were beneficial. Recommendations for changes were made in regard to extending the length of the training sessions. Participants recommended that the individualized education plan and functional behavior assessment-behavior intervention plan training sessions be increased to a full day of training. Participants also recommended that the retention program be implemented at the beginning of each school year.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Description of the Setting

The local school district in which the site school is located is considered the agribusiness center of Florida. The economic impact of agribusiness exceeds $1.3 billion dollars annually. Employment in the city is 30.5% industrial, 36.6% commercial, and 32.9% service (School Profile Committee, personal communication, December 14, 2004). The average income is $41,783; the median income is $32,405 (School Profile Committee, personal communication, December 13, 2004).

The original site school, which is a high school, was built in 1914. In 1972, the current secondary school campus was built. The site school is a public community school in the local school district, which has a history of students graduating, returning to teach, and advancing to administrative positions at the site school. Over the past 10 years, at least 40 site school graduates have become members of the faculty or staff.

The site school had an enrollment of over 2,400 students during the time this study took place. There were approximately 260 migrant students. Migrant students were able to enroll in school later than other students due to their families' migrating for employment in agricultural-related industries. The site school's mobility rate was 34%, 16% higher than the statewide median.

The site school's administrative staff had a combined 120 years of educational expertise. The administrative team consisted of one principal, one assistant principal for curriculum, one assistant principal for administration, and three assistant principals for student affairs. Four administrators earned undergraduate degrees in education. Other undergraduate degrees that had been earned by administrators at the school included degrees in police science and psychology. Two administrators had doctoral degrees.

During the 2003-2004 school year the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) department at the site school consisted of 20 female teachers, 2 male teachers, and 1 female ESE specialist. Five ESE teachers were hired to begin the 2003-2004 school year. Four of the 5 newly hired ESE teachers were hired on *out-of-field status,* which means that the teachers were not certified in the subject areas they were assigned to teach. Four of the 5 newly hired ESE teachers were unfamiliar with ESE policies and procedures prior to the start of the 2003-2004 school year. The 22 ESE teachers were assigned by exceptionality: 9 were teachers of specific learning disabled students, 1 was a teacher of hearing impaired students, 3 were teachers of students with trainable mentally handicapped conditions, 3 were teachers of emotionally handicapped students, 2 were teachers of severely emotionally disturbed students, 3 were teachers of educable mentally handicapped students, and 1 was an ESE specialist.

The researcher had been an ESE teacher at the site school for 2 years and had been an employee of the local school district for 3 years. Prior to teaching in this school district, the researcher taught for a combined 5 years in ESE departments in two other public school districts in Florida.

Nature of the Problem

Daily, schools are faced with an array of responsibilities, such as (a) maintaining student safety, (b) increasing the attendance rates of students, (c) improving the academic abilities of students, and (d) properly carrying out Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) of students with disabilities, in their ESE departments. Schools are also facing a far more serious crisis of retaining teachers in the ESE departments to carry out the specially designed instructional roles.

The problem this study addressed was a yearly increase in rate of attrition of ESE

teachers at the site school over 5 years. In 1999, two ESE teachers did not return to the ESE department at the site school. In 2000, two additional ESE teachers did not return to the site school. In 2001, three ESE teachers did not return. In 2002, three ESE teachers did not return. In 2003, five ESE teachers did not return; and in 2004, seven ESE teachers did not return. Over 5 years, the number of ESE teachers who left the ESE department at the site school increased over 300%.

To begin the 2003-2004 school year, five ESE teachers were hired to fill vacant instructional ESE positions at the site school. Prior to the end of the 2003-2004 school year, the five newly hired teachers all interviewed, or at least searched, for positions in a non-ESE department at the site school. In addition to the five newly hired teachers, three of the tenured ESE teachers from the department interviewed for alternate positions outside of the ESE department. The attrition of teachers left vacancies that were not filled for the start of the 2004-2005 school year and that were later filled with teachers who were not knowledgeable about ESE policies and procedures.

There was no program or solution in place to address the attrition problem at the site school. The ESE department continued to have a revolving door for ESE teachers. The newly hired ESE teachers did not feel a sense of belonging, and the stress of the position at the onset fostered their intentions to leave the department. Multiple additional responsibilities were given to the veteran ESE teachers because of the novice ESE teachers' inexperience and the vacant positions that were created by teachers' leaving. When a vacancy was created, the administrators assigned a substitute to the position, but the experienced ESE teachers were given additional responsibilities associated with the specialized paperwork and development of IEP planning. The veteran ESE teachers at the site school stated that they were overwhelmed because their caseload of students had

increased with their responsibilities.

Purpose of the Project

The purposes of this applied dissertation project were to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that lead to retention of ESE teachers and the role leaders play at the school level in influencing quality teachers to remain in the field of education and to use this knowledge to (a) analyze the factors that lead to the attrition of ESE teachers, (b) develop a retention program based on findings, and (c) evaluate the usefulness of the teacher-retention program as it related to the site school. Specifically, the project explored factors related to the attrition rate of ESE teachers in general as well as specifically at the site school. It explored effective retention programs in order to design a long-term support and retention program at the site school to retain ESE teachers. This study accomplished the following:

1. It researched reasons why teachers new to the site school's ESE department left the department.

2. It generated a clear understanding of the needs and stressors of ESE teachers at site school.

3. It identified components of quality mentoring and support programs that could be implemented at the site school to reduce the attrition rate of ESE teachers.

4. It developed a teacher-retention program.

5. It evaluated the developed program after implementation.

Another purpose of the project was to explore factors related to the success of ESE teachers. The researcher researched possible solutions to ameliorate the ESE teacher turnover problem at the site school by researching effective retention programs and gaining a clear understanding of the factors that impacted the ESE teachers' decisions to

remain or leave the ESE teaching assignment at the site school.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. What factors lead to exceptional student educators' intent to leave the field of ESE?

Research Question 2. What are the greatest determinants to exceptional student educators staying in the field of ESE?

Research Question 3. What can school districts do to prepare inexperienced ESE teachers to meet the demands of ESE positions?

Research Question 4. What are the characteristics of an effective retention program for ESE teachers?

Research Question 5. How should an ESE retention program be implemented and evaluated?

Research Question 6. What changes, if any, should be considered for the ESE department at the site school?

Research Question 7. What leadership role should the school's leadership team play in a teacher support and retention program to support teachers--particularly ESE teachers--effectively so that ESE teachers have the resources and tools that are needed to perform quality teaching?

After researching these initial questions, the researcher developed a teacher-retention program that was based upon the information that was gained through answers to the research questions. This teacher-retention program was implemented at the site school and evaluated.

Definition of Terms

A *mentally handicapped student* is a student who has significant cognitive

disabilities and more generalized deficits in learning. *Attrition* refers to a teacher's leaving his or her position. *Retention* refers to a teacher's remaining in his or her position. A *functional behavior assessment* (FBA) exists for the purpose of gathering information in order to understand the reasons why and the times at which a student exhibits unwanted behavior. The student's *behavior intervention plan* (BIP) includes positive strategies, programs, or curricular modifications along with supplementary aids and supports that are required to address the behaviors of concern. *Accommodations* comprise a wide range of techniques and support systems that help students with a disability work around any limitations that result from their disability.

Summary

The attrition rate of special education teachers is a nationwide dilemma. The site school was not exempt from the predicament. District personnel, administrators, and educators were faced with excruciating circumstances due to the turnover of special education teachers.

School officials must prepare for accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities by providing them with highly qualified ESE instructors. In order to meet the needs of students with disabilities, workplace conditions must be improved to provide the much-needed training, resources, and assistance that special education teachers require in order to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The researcher conducted a thorough review of literature related to the attrition and retention rates of ESE teachers. Characteristics that contributed to both the retention rate and the attrition rate of teachers were reviewed.

Bender, Fore, and Martin (2002) reported reasons related to the high attrition rate in exceptional education. They found that poor working conditions contributed to the high rate of exceptional educators' leaving of the field. Expectations of inclusive instruction, changes in disciplinary tactics, and increases in paperwork loads were variables that contributed to the study's ESE teacher's decision to teach ESE students no longer. Some exceptional educators who did not return to teaching positions filled administrative and district-level positions (T. Hall, personal communication, October 18. 2004). Stress associated with job requirements, lack of support from administrators, and lack of proper staff development training were additional factors that contributed to exceptional student educators' not returning to prospective positions.

There is a growing, nationwide shortage of teachers, in particular ESE teachers (T. Hall, personal communication, October 18, 2004). Schools are faced with designing strategies to address the problem of teacher attrition. The literature that was reviewed addressed various issues relative to the supply of and demand for special education teachers. Topics that were covered in the literature that was reviewed were (a) definition of and reasons for teacher shortage and attrition, (b) roles that working conditions play in teacher retention and recruitment, (c) roles that monetary compensation (teacher salary) play in teacher recruitment and retention, (d) teacher mentoring programs (the advantages of such programs and their desired outcomes), and (e) retention strategies to recruit and retain ESE teachers.

Congressional analysis of data from Annual Reports to Congress (McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004) indicated that, in 2001, there was a shortage of 47,532 teachers of exceptional education. The shortage resulted in approximately 808,000 students' being taught by uncertified personnel in 2000-2001. The Council for Exceptional Children predicted that the United States would need more than 200,000 special education teachers to fill open positions by 2005 (McLeskey et al.).

Reports did not indicate that the critical shortage of ESE teachers will lessen. According to Brownell, Hirsch, and Seo (2004), "Without research demonstrating how to attract and retain special educators, the nation is likely to be discussing the pernicious problem of teacher shortages in special education for decades to come" (p. 60). Ninety million dollars are spent annually by the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education to increase the numbers of special education teachers. The hiring of uncertified teachers does not improve the attrition problem. The attrition rate of Kentucky's special education teachers during the first 5 years of teaching was 75% to 80% (Brownell et al., 2004). The national attrition average of special education teachers is 50% (Brownell et al., 2004).

One method for supporting ESE teachers is to ensure that the individuals who are in supportive roles have the appropriate background expertise to be resources:

> School districts must ensure that people responsible for making placement decisions-who serve on students' IEP teams-are well trained not only in the legal requirements of least restrictive environment but also in pedagogical theory, instructional techniques, and materials to assist in the task. (Rickey, 2003, p. 52)

Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, now called the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," was designed to assure the following:

1. All handicapped children have a free public education that emphasizes special

education and related services available to them and designed to meet their unique needs.

2. The rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected.

3. States and localities provide for the education of all handicapped children.

4. The effectiveness of efforts to educate handicapped children is assessed (Protigal, 1999).

The workplace conditions for all teachers in special education comprised the most important determinant of intent to leave the field of teaching (Kaff, 2004). Environmental variables proved to be powerful predictors of intent. Job dissatisfaction had a strong impact on the intent not to continue teaching. In a typical week, educators of students with disabilities were responsible for (a) delivering direct instruction to students, (b) codelivering instruction with another teacher, (c) monitoring student progress, (d) allocating resources, (f) supervising paraprofessionals, (g) monitoring curricular adaptations and modifications in general education settings, (h) coordinating cases, (i) advocating or mentoring, (j) completing paperwork, (k) developing IEPs, (l) collaborating and consulting with administrators, (m) shifting between general and special educators' lesson plans, (n) designing and implementing modifications of curricular materials, (o) collaborating and consulting with parents, (p) evaluating students, and (q) scheduling students (Kaff).

Teachers of students with disabilities stated that teaching was no longer the major responsibility due to other roles (Kaff, 2004). Teachers believed that someone else should have been hired to perform the nonteaching duties and reported that special educators were not provided adequate resources to perform multiple roles (Kaff). Many nonteaching duties extended beyond the normal school day without additional compensation. Teachers usually were not compensated for time they committed beyond

contractual hours, and it is only recently that a connection between quality education and financial reward has been recognized: “If school districts want the quality of education to continue, school districts are going to have to start valuing education by increasing teacher pay and fully funding special education programming” (Kaff, 2004, p. 6).

Throughout the 1990s, uncertified personnel filled more than 30,000 special education positions each year (Kaff, 2004). During the 2000-2001 school year, 11.4% of all teachers lacked appropriate special education certification (Kaff).

Billingsley (2004) studied special education teacher attrition and described the problem. Billingsley’s definition of *attrition* is “[transfer] to general education teaching positions” (p. 40) and “exit attrition, which included those who left teaching altogether” (p. 40). Exit attrition involves both a reduction in the teaching force and an intake process. The study of attrition is time-consuming and difficult (Billingsley). Some researchers have resorted to studying the existing populations of special education teachers to determine their intent to leave (Billingsley). The study of intent reveals “a range of district and teacher variables” that illustrate existing organizational situations (Billingsley, p. 40).

Rickey (2003) repeatedly expressed concern over the shortage of teachers in special education, which has a direct effect on the delivery of appropriate services for students with disabilities. Rickey’s study of ESE teachers’ intent to remain in the field of special education dramatically demonstrated the severity of the problem. Almost half of the teachers who participated in Rickey’s study were planning to leave the field of ESE within the next 5 years. The problem of a nationwide critical shortage of qualified ESE teachers continues to be a trend that has potential to affect the education of thousands of special needs students negatively.

Special education is challenged to increase the supply of teachers. Statewide initiatives (e.g., reduction in class size) are expected to increase the shortage (Brownell et al., 2004). The problem of attrition affects both the quality and the quantity components of schools (Brownell et al., 2004).

Severe, chronic, and *pervasive* are terms that are used to describe the shortage of certified special education teachers. Billingsley (2004) identified major themes of attrition: "teacher characteristics and personal factors . . . teacher qualifications . . . teacher work environments, and . . . teacher affective reaction to work" (p. 3).

Teacher shortages in special education comprise a fairly new problem at the site school, but "special education has had teacher shortages since the inception of the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975, and there is little to suggest that this scenario might improve" (Brownell et al., 2004, p. 1). Most severe special education shortages exist in poor urban and rural schools that serve students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Over the 5 years that immediately preceded the time of this study, the number of ESE students at the site school increased 23%, which was in keeping with the general increase in ESE student population increase. As Brownell, Sindelair, Bishop, Langley, and Seo (2002) stated, "From 1992 to 1999, the nation's students (age 3 to 12) grew by 6.8%. At the same time, the number of special education students grew by 20.3%" (p. 3).

Beginning special education teachers are expected to carry out the same responsibilities as experienced special education teachers. Novice teachers have fewer contacts from whom to seek guidance. Beginning teachers have fewer resources and limited knowledge of where to obtain needed resources and support. The nature of the work coupled with limited resources and lack of a support system contributes to a

beginning special education teacher's doubting his or her ability to meet the demands of the job. Fear of failure influences inexperienced special education teachers to leave their positions (ESE teacher, personal communication, May 14, 2004).

Teacher burnout has been linked to dissatisfaction with special education university programs, professional development opportunities, and social support networks (Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002). Assisting ESE teachers in becoming knowledgeable about special education classroom procedures is vital to retaining teachers in the field. From year to year, special education teacher retention has been significantly less than general education teacher attrition (Nichols & Sosnowsky).

Nichols and Sosnowsky (2002) reported results from a study that revealed that "43% of newly hired teachers in Michigan were no longer teaching in the field of special education" (p. 72). Teachers who left the field reported behavioral issues and caseload sizes as stress-related variables that led them to the decision to leave their positions. Teachers reported that lack of preparation from both university special education programs and school district training resulted in special education teachers' not being prepared to handle day-to-day situations.

Diversity is essential to ensuring that students with disabilities are afforded opportunities to interact with teachers who reflect the diverse society in which the nation's people live (Billingsley, 2004). The critical need remains for teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Evidence suggests that the number of special education teachers from diverse backgrounds is declining. McLeskey et al. (2004) stated that, by 2009, 40% of the students, but only 12% of the teachers, will be from diverse backgrounds.

For over 2 decades, policy makers have studied issues related to special education

teacher shortages and attrition. Billingsley (2004) reported that special education teachers are the most likely to depart. Inadequate educational training is linked to the turnover of special education teachers. Recruitment alone does not solve the special education teacher shortage when many beginning teachers leave, after 1 to 5 years of teaching. Recruiting thousands of teachers through a revolving door system that has not been revamped to accommodate beginning special educators is not advantageous: "Efforts to reduce attrition should be based on an understanding of factors that contribute to special educators' decisions to leave the field" (Billingsley, p. 39).

Working Conditions

Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004) stated that, in order to build a committed and qualified teaching force, careful attention must be paid to working conditions during the beginning years of special education teachers. A supported and nurtured teaching environment is created through understanding of what beginning teachers experience. First-year teachers go through a survival stage in which they nervously juggle being evaluated, being liked by students, and gaining control of the classroom (Billingsley et al.). Beginning teachers often overestimate their abilities and have unrealistic expectations. Novice teachers often underestimate the time it takes to teach a lesson.

The beginning years of teaching are the most difficult. Beginning teachers struggle with (a) student behavior, (b) correct discipline strategies, (c) difficult parents, and (d) insufficient support from their place of work (Billingsley et al., 2004). First-year teachers are given the most challenging teaching assignments (Billingsley et al.). The struggles that novice teachers face, coupled with challenging teaching assignments, contribute to the high level of teacher migration and attrition in the early years.

It is essential that school leaders support special educators. Billingsley et al.

(2004) reported two categories of assistance: psychological support and instruction-related support. Psychological support is needed to help new teachers gain confidence and become self-reliant. Instruction-related support is provided to assist teachers with knowledge and skills that are needed to carry out work-related tasks effectively.

Teachers who experience problems in combination are apt to withdraw, increasing attrition. Problems that were identified by Billingsley et al. (2004) as those that place ESE teachers at risk for leaving their teaching positions included (a) feelings of exclusion, (b) limited access to materials, (c) classroom management difficulties, (d) tasks that interfered with teaching, and (e) principals who did not understand the field of special education.

Working conditions do not coincide with the training preparation that is provided to ESE teachers. Special education teachers serve students in multiple disability groups. Nearly half of all new teachers leave the teaching profession within the first 5 years because of poor working conditions ("Working Conditions," 2004). Inadequate resources, low salaries, large amounts of paperwork, and large class sizes contribute to new teachers' changing fields ("Working Conditions").

Hoffman (2004), quoting a teacher who left the teaching profession after 2 short years, reported that "the in-box was always full. Everyday [*sic*], I would get to school and it would be a race against the clock" (p. 73). Hoffman explained that the teacher was aggravated by the magnitude of responsibilities that were not related to student learning and shared how the teacher spent extended amounts of time chasing down resources and completing forms. An abundance of time and work was used on standardized reports cards, which were only partially meaningful for parents. Too much time was spent in

staff meetings reviewing administrative and bureaucratic tasks that were not related to student learning. The teacher reported being exhausted from defending the teaching profession after informing individuals of career choice. There was an air of desperation about the educator to depart the education profession.

Hoffman (2004) reported that individuals left the teaching profession because they no longer enjoyed their jobs. In 2000, 95% of eligible teachers opted for Newfoundland's early retirement (Hoffman). Forty percent of the secondary schools in Ontario reported having five teachers or more on stress leave in the same year (Hoffman). The teachers were stressed by conditions over which they had no control, such as policies of inclusion that did not provide the needed supports. Hoffman reported that teachers endured textbook shortages, large class rosters, and sick buildings. Singly, the issues could have been manageable, but "the combination of issues creates a very stressful working environment" (Hoffman, p. 74).

Many beginning teachers are confused about educational goals and purposes. Teachers feel a need to clarify their relationship both to the school and to the community (Harper, 2000). Harper stated that teachers believe that "negotiating with administrators [is] difficult" (p. 147). Teachers are stretched thin in attempts to decipher administrative structures between the school and community.

Harper (2000) reported how teachers isolated themselves in small groups. Teachers felt like outsiders and were uncomfortable teaching at the schools (Harper). Some teachers saw themselves as transients (Harper). One first-year teacher stated that the position was not perceived as a permanent position because the teacher's heart was not in the position (Harper). Teachers indicated that they did not intend to stay at the schools in which they were teaching at the time of Harper's study.

Beginning ESE teachers also feel excluded at their schools. At one particular school, one ethnic group of educators was excluded from a Parent Teacher Association meeting regarding discipline. The act of exclusion escalated considerable tension between teachers and some parents. The teachers believed that the exclusion increased the difficulty of determination of their relationships to the community (Harper, 2000). Beginning teachers were unprepared to deal with such conflicts (Harper).

Subtle forms of systematic discrimination permeate some schools. One experienced teacher felt undervalued by the community because of ongoing efforts to replace one nationality of teachers with another nationality (Harper, 2000). Harper stated that several teachers commented on dealing with discrimination because of belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Student diversity, in terms of age, exceptionalities, and backgrounds, also promotes stressful working conditions. One 10th-grade teacher in Harper's (2000) study taught students ranging in age from 15 to 20 years. The students exhibited high absenteeism, poor skills, and poor behavior. The school had a high level of violence. Teachers felt unprepared for the types of demands that were placed on them (Harper). Harper composed the following questions relative to working conditions:

> Is it really possible to prepare teachers from the South for work and life in the North? . . . If it is possible, how do we best prepare teachers for careers in remote, Northern, band-controlled schools? . . . Who should control or direct such preparation and ongoing professional development, and how should this be done? . . . What needs to be included, and where should such educational preparation take place? . . . For whom (which students, which schools, which communities) are we currently preparing and inservicing [*sic*] teachers? . . . How do issues of sex, race, and other forms of social difference affect the recruitment, initial preparation, ongoing professional development, and personal experience of female teachers? . . . How should or can teacher education programs and ongoing professional and community development address discrimination issues? . . . What is the role of female teachers in the ongoing process by which the communities develop their school policies and practices? (p. 154)

The researcher is aware that, generally, teacher education programs will not prepare individuals for every situation a first-year teacher might face. Harper (2000) suggested that individuals should be, at the least, prepared to teach across differences. Teacher programs should be reevaluated to prepare teachers for multicultural environments (Harper). Student teachers should be exposed to schools different from those with which they are familiar (Harper).

Across the globe, declining working conditions are creating a severe shortage of teachers ("New Study," 2002). Deteriorating working conditions are discouraging new recruits from the teaching profession. According to "New Study," governments are having difficulty attracting young professionals to the teaching field to replace elderly, retiring educators.

Keller (2003) reported that North Carolina teachers are not pleased with the working conditions in which they were employed and that they did not have ample time to perform the job well, to collaborate with colleagues, or to be better teachers. Lower performing schools in North Carolina reported having more dissatisfied teachers.

Russ, Chiang, Rylance, and Bongers (2001) completed a study of the caseload of special education teachers as it related to attrition rate. Prior to the research, Russ et al. suspected that caseloads contributed to the high attrition rate of special education teachers. They reported that "61% of special education teachers cited large caseloads as a major problem" (p. 165). Russ et al.'s study revealed that teachers left education because of the perception of poor school climates and tasks related to large caseloads. The impact of caseload on teacher attrition forced the districts to hire unqualified individuals and to increase caseloads even more. Russ et al. concluded that special education caseloads warrant serious attention.

School leaders should be mindful that many special education teachers have minimal preparation during the beginning years (Russ et al., 2001). Billingsley et al. (2004) reported, "Beginning special educators need other special educators as their mentors" (p. 335). Researchers have stressed the importance of support systems and positive working conditions for beginning special educators (Russ et al.).

Salary

Renwick (2001) stated that teachers in the United States spend more time in the classrooms but are paid less money than teachers in other industrialized countries and reported on a study that was completed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development that researched trends in education. The study revealed that the United States has a low public investment in education as compared to other countries (Renwick). The salary gap between educators and other college-educated employees was at a 60-year high ("Five Steps," 2002) in 2002.

Challenging teaching assignments bring hazards, such as injuries from fights, car vandalism, and risk of being shot (Bittel & Flickinger, 2001). Increased responsibility warrants increased pay. The standard hazard pay equation is traditional for fields other than education.

Going against tradition, for the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years, the local school district in which the site school is located allocated funds to provide differential pay to teachers who taught at targeted, low-performing, Title I schools in the district. A school is labeled a "Title I school" when the majority of the students who are enrolled receive a free or reduced-priced lunch (J. Copeland, personal communication, June 19, 2004). A 5% salary differential is paid to highly qualified teachers with 0 to 5 years of teaching experience. A 10% salary differential is paid to highly qualified teachers with

over 5 years of teaching experience. A prerequisite for receipt of the additional funds is that the teacher must have score satisfactorily overall on the spring evaluation of the previous year. The site school was not one of the schools that received the salary differential supplements.

In Baltimore County, teacher qualifications are not evenly disbursed throughout the district (Keller, 2003). The total faculty cost varies from school to school. Average teacher salaries range from $41,000 to $60,000 in Baltimore County, depending upon the school (Keller). The least-favored schools, which receive fewer applicants, pay lower salaries: "A higher average salary at a particular school generally denotes that the teachers were selected from a larger pool of applicants than at a school with a lower average salary, yielding a more capable faculty" (Keller, p. 3). The wide choice among teacher applicants that is enjoyed by some schools comes at the expense of other schools.

Even the state of New York is not exempt from teacher salary challenges: "Fueled by . . . overcrowded classrooms . . . lack of support, and . . . low pay, the annual exodus [leaves] many of the neediest students without qualified instructors" (Gehring, 2003, p. 154). The state of New York has contributed funds to increase teacher salaries to address teacher shortages in its urban areas (Gehring). The New York City Board of Education was sued in 2000 by the New York state commissioner for hiring nearly 600 uncertified teachers in low-performing schools in contrast to state law (Gehring).

Urban districts of New York experience difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified teachers (Gehring, 2003). The quality of teachers varies with salary from school to school. The education challenges that are faced by the New York school districts are insurmountable: "The problem is so big, and many of the things that are needed require local in addition to state and federal action" (Gehring, p. 154).

Unfavorable economic times hamper Mississippi's efforts to attract more teachers (Deily, 2003). According to Deily, districts in the poor, rural Mississippi Delta are desperate to obtain and keep teachers. Deily reported that, during the 2000-2001 school year, 5.4% of Mississippi teachers statewide and 8.8% in impoverished districts were uncertified. Long-term substitutes have filled special education vacancies in some school districts in Mississippi (Deily). In 2000, Mississippi vowed to raise salaries in an effort to attract more qualified teachers, but, according to Deily, the playing field had not been leveled as of 2003.

Iowa struggles to recruit and retain educators: "Rural school districts in Iowa struggle to keep pace with competitors in offering teachers attractive salaries" (Reid, 2003, p. 131). Rural districts struggle to fill jobs in special education because they are not able to offer salaries comparable to those of urban and suburban districts. Reid reported that districts consider sharing teachers to fill the vacancies. According to Reid, Des Moines, the largest school district in Iowa, offers $2,400 signing bonuses for teachers in shortage areas. No incentive program is in place to attract teachers to low-performing schools.

As more money has been invested in public education, teacher salaries have remained the same. During the time 1997 and 2000, Wall Street financial analyst Standard & Poor showed that administrative spending in Michigan outpaced teacher salaries by 10.5% ("NEA: Teacher Salaries," 2002). The average wages of the civilian workforce rose 8.5% from 1991 to 2001 ("NEA: Teacher Salaries"). During the same period, the average salary for teachers rose 3.0% ("NEA: Teacher Salaries"). The nation has to be serious about attracting and retaining quality teachers ("NEA: Teacher Salaries").

Mentoring

Researchers have linked decreasing rates of teacher attrition to mentors: "More experienced teachers mentoring less experienced teachers has become a common practice in many states and school districts" (Westling & Cooper-Duffy, 2003, p. 155). Brownell et al. (2004) reported that the Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Testing teacher-retention program, in which "most of the funds go to mentor training," produced a low 3% attrition rate for the program participants (p. 58). Whitaker (2002) reported that "evidence suggested that, as a result of guidance and support provided through mentoring, beginning teachers are more likely to remain in the teaching profession" (p. 3).

Lang and Fox (2004) stated that there is a serious need to prepare school systems to accommodate the needs of students with severe disabilities. Traditional staff development practices (workshops, lectures, handouts) have not provided teachers with the skills and strategies to reach maximum performance potential:

> Given the national crisis around finding and retaining qualified instructional and support personnel with expertise in the area of severe disabilities, school systems must become sophisticated at providing professional development activities that will facilitate increased competence and retention of promising personnel. (Lang & Fox, p. 171)

Lang and Fox (2004) verified a need for ongoing, intensive professional development practices. The process should provoke experimentation and reflection from teachers (Lang & Fox). Teachers should engage in professional development that is based on student and workplace issues (Lang & Fox).

The writer is aware that professional development methods should be hands-on and that it should provide practice for real-life teaching experiences. There are forms of staff development that enable teachers to engage in the practice actively. As Lang and

Fox (2004) stated,

> Alternative forms of professional development that may facilitate teachers [*sic*] active participation and address teachers' questions about practice may include (a) action research, (b) experimenting, (c) reflecting, (d) collaborating, (e) modeling, (f) coaching, (g) problem solving, (h) observing, (i) mentoring, (j) studying students work, and (k) participating in study groups. (p. 167)

Professional development strategies should provide teachers with (a) feedback, (b) support, and (c) a follow-up to ensure effectiveness (Lang & Fox).

Collaborative staff development strategies allow teachers to share successful methods--"collaborative strategies also provide the (a) social, (b) emotional, and (c) intellectual engagement with colleagues needed to change practice" (Lang & Fox, 2004, p. 167). A variety of strategies that allows educators to share experiences and successful techniques should be considered when coordinating professional development activities for teachers (Lang & Fox).

Beginning teachers of students with disabilities require more strategies than are given to beginning general education teachers. Teachers of students with disabilities require regular updates of state mandates. Professional development should be planned according to the desired learning outcome (Lang & Fox, 2004). Lang and Fox stressed that the learning styles of teachers must also be taken into consideration in planning for professional development.

The attrition rate of special educators was considered when "the Western Carolina University Teacher Support Program (TSP) was initiated to provide support to teachers of students with disabilities in Western North Carolina" (Westling & Cooper-Duffy, 2003, p. 154). The TSP arranged for teachers to receive professional development through multiple strategies. Westling and Cooper-Duffy explained how the TSP coordinated groups of teachers to assist other teachers in small collaboration groups. The TSP

developed discussion forums and held live participant chats in which the teachers posed questions and received timely or immediate feedback to questions. In an effort to close the gap between research and practice, the TSP provided additional assistance to participants and media resources to applicants when such were requested. Experienced teachers mentored less experienced teachers. The TSP coordinators visited participants' classrooms upon request to assist with problem solution, and the TSP participants received teacher release days, which enabled them to attend legitimate professional development workshops. Participants identified and designed the type of professional development they desired, and the TSP consultants conducted the sessions (Westling & Cooper-Duffy).

School districts must continually examine problems that are encountered by novice special education teachers. Without an assistive leadership structure and personal development strategies, the attrition problems remain, and the beginning teachers leave. Mastropieri (2001) stated that it has become more challenging to prepare new teachers to teach students with disabilities. The retention of veteran teachers is the preferred choice (Mastropieri).

Some school settings are equipped with supportive administrators, mentors, and coteachers (Mastropieri, 2001). There are some school districts that assign first-year teachers a mentor experienced in the novice teachers' assigned exceptionalities. Beginning teachers have a need to feel supported in school-related tasks and issues (Mastropieri).

Having resources readily available contributes to a positive school year. Mastropieri (2001) shared "a teacher's dream scenario that became a reality when the district provided numerous resources and the building administrator made financial

resources available for the teachers to purchase necessary curriculum materials and supplies" (p. 71) The only disadvantage Mastropieri noted from the implementation of the teacher's dream situation was the lack of updated computers: "The computers that were available were more suitable for museum pieces than as examples of recent technological advances" (p. 71). The suitable working conditions contributed to this particular ESE teacher's remaining in her position.

There are positive and negative aspects to working with a paraprofessional. The researcher realizes the importance of working relationships in the field of special education. Paraprofessionals and teachers do not always function and collaborate as a cohesive team. A successful partnership between the special education teachers and the assigned paraprofessionals provides supportive assistance to the first-year teachers. Teachers learn through trial and error to (a) work with, (b) collaborate with, (c) supervise, and (d) manage paraprofessionals (Mastropieri, 2001). Mastropieri recalled that some roles and responsibilities of special education teachers are obvious. Other roles and responsibilities are neither written nor assumed. School handbooks list many obvious teaching roles. Additional tips on the hidden roles and responsibilities teachers may encounter can be provided by district personnel during beginning teacher training and during other staff development training sessions.

Some teachers are assigned out-of-field teaching assignments in which the teachers have little knowledge and no prior experience. On-the-job supports are needed in order to assist teachers who are assigned to positions in which they have no training (Mastropieri, 2001). Districts could provide to teachers teaching out of field intensive training similar to the full-time, 8-week training programs provided in the corporate world.

Retention

High-poverty, high-minority schools experience high rates of teacher attrition. Park (2003) reported that almost everybody is focused on teacher retention. Alternative routes that streamline mid-career switches for individuals with bachelor's degrees into education have been effective at recruiting more male teachers into education. Park said that many of the male teachers who are recruited willingly work in high-need schools.

Certo and Fox (2002) stated that certain characteristics of a teacher diminish the likelihood of retention, but research has shown that "organization [*sic*] conditions have significant effects" on teacher retention (p. 58). Researchers have linked job satisfaction to teacher retention: "Work environment clearly leads to levels of teacher job satisfaction" (Certo & Fox, p. 58). Certo and Fox also stated that aspects of the teacher-retention puzzle include (a) administrative leadership and support; (b) interaction and emotional support from mentors and colleagues; (c) relationships with parents, families, and students; (d) professional challenge and autonomy; (e) and opportunities for advancement.

Certo and Fox (2002) reported that work conditions determined the level of job satisfaction in retaining teachers: "Teachers highly involved in their work attributed their decision to stay in teaching more to supportive work conditions than to pay" (p. 58). The following work conditions were reported as supportive: (a) appropriate workload, (b) opportunities for collegial interaction, (c) professional development, (d) participation in the making of decisions, and (e) actions toward student discipline.

Teachers who control the terms of the work they perform have favorable attitudes toward work (Certo & Fox, 2002). For beginning teachers, professional development and mentorship are beneficial in increasing retention. Certo and Fox reported that first-year

teachers feel isolated behind the classroom door. Long-range and short- range planning assistance have proven to be beneficial in the early years of teaching (Certo & Fox). Experienced teachers who have taught in the same or a similar discipline provide the best advice for novice teachers (Certo & Fox).

Certo and Fox (2002) asked teachers to give reasons for staying in the education profession. Generally, the three main reasons teachers stayed in the education profession were (a) commitment to the profession, (b) quality administration, and (c) an appreciation for relationship with colleagues. Commitment to the profession included a commitment to the students or the subject matter. Quality administration was provided by supportive building-level administrators. A teacher stated, "I know that, if something comes up and I have followed the correct procedures . . . the administrators are going to back the teachers up" (Certo & Fox, p. 61). *Collegial relationships* referred to collaboration with teachers and staff members to maximize productivity.

Certo and Fox (2002) offered both district- and building-level recommendations for retaining teachers. Across-the-board work conditions--including administrative support, planning time, and salary--played significant roles in the teacher retention equation (Certo & Fox). Certo and Fox stressed that "the quality of school community and performance rests on the retention of teachers" (p. 73).

Teacher confidence is a vital characteristic of teaching success; "feelings of satisfaction and confidence are associated with those teachers who choose to remain in teaching" (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000, p. 11). Boyer and Gillespie wrote about the continuing need for new special educators' support and induction programs after finding that student progression increases and teacher confidence is enhanced through these types of programs.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) reported that praise increases confidence to push further, which increases the self-esteem of novice and experienced teachers. Their plan was to incorporate strategies, mentors, and support staff that meshed and fostered a more positive attitude and support system for new teachers.

Summary

Various reasons for ESE teacher retention and attrition were reviewed in the research literature. Poor working conditions and low salaries were the two most frequently occurring characteristics of ESE teacher attrition. Teachers who received necessary resources and supports were likely to remain in their positions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

The researcher used development, implementation, and evaluation in the research design. The development of (a) procedural, curricular, and staff development manuals; (b) educational and organizational procedures; (c) staff development programs; and (d) curriculum-related products is viewed by staff development coordinators as an effective means of resolving educational and workplace problems (T. Hall, personal communication, October 14, 2004). Therefore, this was a valid methodological choice for address of the problem of teacher retention at the site school. Problem resolution required the creation of an effective staff development program as well as the development of program implementation and evaluation, which incorporated procedural components.

Qualitative action research allowed the researcher to discover patterns that led to the high level of teacher attrition at the site school as well as other schools throughout the local school district. The analysis took on a logico-inductive process. The researcher made explanations from patterns; used explanations to answer research questions; and developed an intervention that was based upon the patterns identified, research reviewed, and survey responses analyzed for the site school, then implemented and evaluated the intervention strategy.

Instruments

Two surveys were created to assist in collection of information that was needed to answer the research questions. The first two surveys (see Appendixes A & B) incorporated contributing factors of the problem of ESE teachers' decisions to abandon teaching that were identified in the literature that was reviewed. They were designed to determine whether these same factors were valid at the site school and in the district. The

surveys were designed to be completed anonymously. They used an always, sometimes, and never response format. The surveys also included sections for respondents to write in comments and provide extra feedback to ensure that nondirected input was received.

The third survey, the Policies and Procedures Survey (see Appendix C) was to obtain data related to the effectiveness of the policies and procedures of the ESE department at the site school and identify areas wherein ESE teachers would benefit the most from staff development activities. The Policies and Procedures Survey is an 18-question assessment that relates specifically to completing ESE documents. The questions assessed knowledge of each step in the completion of an individualized education plan. The teachers were asked to rate their knowledge of each aspect of ESE procedures. The ESE teachers at the site school were asked to grade their own document-completing abilities on a scale of 1 (the least competent) to 3 (the most competent). On the survey rating scale, 1 = *not familiar or not proficient,* 2 = *somewhat familiar or somewhat proficient,* and 3 = *very familiar or very proficient.* The survey included a section for respondents to write in comments and provide extra feedback to allow for the inclusion of any skills, procedures, and policies that may have been left off the survey. The Policies and Procedures Survey is a pre- and postimplementation survey; the effectiveness of the ESE staff development program could be determined.

Formative Committee

A formative committee acted in an advisory capacity and consisted of (a) the site school's ESE department head, (b) the site school's ESE specialist, (c) the site school's resource teacher, and (d) members of the site school's administrative team. The committee members reviewed the drafted surveys and aided in refining the staff-development plan. The members of the formative committee reviewed the data that were

gathered by the researcher and provided feedback as needed throughout the study. Modifications that were suggested by the formative committee were made to the surveys and to the actual staff development program.

Summative Committee

The summative committee consisted of 1 mentor, 1 district staffing coordinator, 2 off-site ESE specialists, and 2 out-of-county ESE teachers. The summative committee reviewed the final product (the ESE teachers' staff development program; see Appendix D) and provided constructive criticism. The members of the summative committee also provided pertinent details that enhanced implementation of the plan.

Participants

The site school ESE teachers comprised the main focus of the study. The summative committee suggested that it would be a good idea to survey former and then-current ESE teachers randomly throughout the school district to get feedback; therefore, nonsite school then-current and former ESE teachers were also surveyed and asked to participate in the study. The researcher contacted an additional 112 then-current and former ESE teachers from the local school district.

The district is divided into seven regions. With assistance from district officials, school administrators, and ESE department heads, an attempt was made to include 16 teachers from each region in the study. Sixteen teachers from each of the 7 regions combined for a total of 112 teachers.

The researcher contacted the district's human resource office and obtained the names and work locations of former ESE teachers in the district and sent surveys with stamped, self-addressed envelopes to the former ESE teachers. The researcher contacted the department heads and ESE specialists of schools throughout the district and delivered

surveys with stamped, self-addressed envelopes to their departments. The ESE specialists and ESE department heads dispersed the surveys to the ESE teachers in the ESE departments.

Procedures

The researcher envisioned a plan to ameliorate the attrition problem in the ESE department at the site school. Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated, "But vision is one thing, action is another" (p. 9).

The researcher's intent was to reveal factors associated with faculty member turnover that contributed to the problem of organizational ineffectiveness. The data from the surveys were analyzed and used to carry out the project goals. An eight-step process guided the research.

Firstly, the researcher researched factors that lead to both the retention and the attrition of ESE teachers. Included in this research was an investigation of programs to assist ESE and beginning teachers that may be valuable in addressing the problem of teacher retention at the site school. Along these same lines, an attempt was made to identify the role school leadership plays in supporting ESE teachers.

Secondly, the researcher formed formative and summative committees. The committees assisted with the development of data-collection instruments, monitored progress, and ensured that the procedures and methods that were used throughout the study followed educationally sound principles and adhered to district policy.

Thirdly, the researcher used the factors that lead to the retention and attrition of ESE teachers in developing survey instruments and determined whether these factors were valid at the site school. The ESE attrition survey (see Appendix A) was based on the reasons for ESE teachers' leaving the profession, as identified in the preliminary

research. The ESE Attrition Survey was given to the teachers who left the site school's ESE department and to other ESE teachers in the district who left their ESE positions within the previous 5 years. Its purpose was to determine whether the reasons that were identified in the research were also reasons why the surveyed teachers were no longer teaching ESE. The ESE support/need survey (see Appendix B) was given to the ESE teachers at the site school. It was based upon the identified factors in ESE teachers' staying or leaving the field. The formative committee reviewed this data-collection instrument. The Policies and Procedures Survey assessed the site school's ESE teachers' knowledge of identified legal policies and procedures that ESE teachers should know.

Fourthly, the researcher gave the surveys to the ESE teachers who had been teaching at the site school and other schools in the district for more than 1 year and to the ESE teachers who left their position within 5 years of their arrival. District personnel were asked for the names and work locations of the teachers who fit the description. A district ESE staffing coordinator was also contacted for assistance in identifying the individuals for the study. Every effort was made to ensure that 100% of the teachers who received a survey completed it so that the researcher had the best opportunity to make valid assumptions that were based on the results of the survey responses. The researcher contacted the ESE department head in reference to the surveys and mailed or delivered surveys to each of the schools with stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Furthermore, the researcher drove to the schools and met with department heads to gain their assistance in getting the ESE teachers to complete the surveys.

Fifthly, the researcher analyzed the survey results and shared them with the summative committee. The results were analyzed in terms of the research questions.

Sixthly, the researcher drew conclusions that were based upon the data that were

gathered in the research and surveys. The researcher then developed a Staff Development Program to retain the ESE teachers at the site school. The Staff Development Program was based upon needed support and leadership. Data that were compiled from the survey for teachers who no longer taught ESE in the district were used as baseline data to compare with responses ESE teachers at the site school gave to the ESE Support/Need Survey for ESE teachers at the site school. Responses to The Procedures and Policies Survey were also analyzed. The results of the analysis of these three surveys were used to develop the content of the staff development program.

Seventhly, the researcher implemented the program with expectations of improving the organization's effectiveness. It was obvious from the preliminary research that more than knowledge of ESE procedures and policies was needed in order to retain teachers. A great deal of retention is the result of a strong support system. The summative committee, with the support of the school's leadership team, assisted with the implementation, and the formative committee evaluated the program implementation and made recommendations for changes that were warranted.

Eighthly, the effectiveness of the program was evaluated. The researcher included an evaluation form titled *Florida Staff Development and Instructor Opinionnaire Instructional Evaluation Form SB86202 Rev. 10-97* to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. This evaluation form was used by the district to assess staff-development activities. The survey was used by the researcher with permission to gather feedback from the ESE teachers who participated in the retention program.

Criteria Development

The goal of the developed staff development program was to build a committed and highly qualified ESE department at the site school. The objective of the program was

to provide both psychological support and instructional-related support to the teachers in the ESE department. The formative and summative committee members assisted in implementing the phases of the plan. The ESE teachers at the site school were responsible for following the plan.

Criteria Validation

Committee members determined the most appropriate content and time frame for implementation. The validity of the survey instruments was verified through the input of both the formative committee and the summative committee. The formative and summative committee members measured the survey in terms of the things that an ESE teacher needs to know in order to complete ESE documents. The teams also considered the type of environment that is conducive to an effective ESE program. The ideas were formed into questions and placed on the surveys. Committee members tested the plan for attractiveness with a sample audience of five ESE educational peers. The ESE peers suggested three additional items to be added to The Policies and Procedures Survey, and the items were added as Questions 19-21. The committee members approved the surveys.

Product Development

The staff development program (see Appendix D) incorporated the information that was gleaned from the research and the data that were obtained from the surveys. The criteria for inclusion in the staff development program were based on the identified practices and procedures that the research review identified as effective elements of a staff development program for ESE teachers. Working-condition improvements, such as salary increases and the hiring of additional personnel to handle nonteaching administrative tasks, were not included because their inclusion in the solution strategy at the site school was infeasible. Nonetheless, the literature review identified them as being

effective solutions.

A development team that consisted of 13 professionals with expertise in the field of special education assisted in refining the program that was developed, implemented, and evaluated by the researcher. Research was conducted at extended length, and pertinent data will continue to be gathered yearly to continue to make improvements to the ESE department at the site high school. Workshops were designed in accordance with the results of analysis of data that were gathered from the surveys, which outlined the areas in which the teachers required training and assistance. The design of the workshops was evaluated by the committee members. Recommendations for improvements and corrections to the workshops were followed.

The workshops were designed to provide strategies to train and empower ESE teachers. The researcher hoped that this would lead to the retention of ESE teachers. The ESE teachers at the site school participated by completing surveys, which aided the researcher in creating a program that specifically addressed the attrition problem at the site high school. With the analysis of survey data, the researcher pinpointed the areas in which the teachers required training. Using the analysis of survey data and insights that were provided through the literature research, the researcher devised a program to educate the ESE teachers through training and to arrange for the teachers to have support through a mentor. The teachers required training for (a) writing IEPs, (b) completing a matrix, and (c) completing an FBA/BIP. Survey data analysis and literature review revealed that the support of a mentor aided in retaining teachers, so providing a mentor was included as a component of the retention program.

Training Development Activities

Multiple leadership skills were used by the researcher to create the Staff

Development Program. The components of the program focused on the primary needs of the ESE teachers.

The researcher was aware that learning styles vary from individual to individual. When designing the training, she included activities that provided whole-group participation, instruction through multiple learning styles, and practice. The researcher designed a program that included both psychological and instructional support. Psychological support was needed to help new teachers gain confidence and become self-reliant. Instruction-related support was provided to assist teachers with knowledge and skills they needed to carry out work-related tasks effectively.

Teachers' strengths and weaknesses were analyzed. The site school ESE teachers were given the ESE support/need survey for ESE teachers at the site school and the Policies and Procedures Survey to complete. These two surveys were designed to gain feedback from the teachers about their strengths and weaknesses related to their job in order to address their concerns and needs in the Staff Development Program. Analysis of the survey data guided the researcher in developing a staff development program that addressed the specific technical and support needs and of the ESE teachers at the site school.

School districts must ensure that IEP team members are well trained in legal requirements (Rickey, 2003), and survey results showed that the site ESE teachers needed training in writing ESE documents. One component of the Staff Development Program was an IEP workshop (see Appendix E). The IEP training provided assistance in writing an IEP that addressed the individualized need of each student. The workshop was designed with a step-by-step approach to instructing teachers to write an IEP. It detailed each individual's responsibilities in writing IEPs. The workshop provided practice with a

completed sample IEP.

Other documentation requirements were also included in the Staff Development Program. A matrix, which is the tool that drives the funding for the ESE students, is completed and updated within 3 days of completion of a student's IEP. Guidelines for writing a good FBA/BIP, which is an assessment of a student's behavior to decrease unwanted behaviors while increasing wanted behaviors, was also included in the staff development training because it was identified as a skill area in which the ESE teachers were weak. The researcher designed a matrix-FBA/BIP workshop (see Appendix F) that taught the ESE teachers how to complete both the Matrix and the FBA/BIP properly. Upon completion of the workshop, the teachers were scheduled to receive samples of both a matrix and a completed FBA/BIP.

Due to the teachers' lack of overall knowledge of ESE policies and procedures (see Appendix G), supported by the data from the completed surveys, an ESE policies and procedures workshop (see Appendix H) was designed. The district training that was available was shared. The different exceptionalities were discussed. Scenarios were shared. Required documents were listed and explained. Tips were given. A question-and-answer session was held.

Due to the ESE teachers' feeling isolated, as identified by survey results, the Benefits of Mentoring Workshop (see Appendix I) was designed. The purpose of the workshop was to explain the purpose of an ESE mentor. The mentor workshop was designed to assign mentors where mentors were needed.

An evaluation form that was used by the local school district was selected for use in evaluating the Staff Development Program. It includes questions that relate to the effectiveness of the trainer, the training, and the atmosphere of the training area. There is

also a place for comments on the evaluation form.

Assumptions

It was assumed that new ESE teachers at the school site were not knowledgeable about ESE policies and procedures and that a plan could be developed to teach new ESE teachers ESE policies and procedures. It was also assumed that new ESE teachers could learn to complete ESE documents properly through workshops and peer support and that they would remain in their positions. It was also assumed that the teachers' survey responses were honest and bias free.

Limitations

Limitations uncontrollable by the researcher and committee members existed. There was no guarantee that the ESE teachers would participate in the program or that the data that were collected from the surveys would provide information that was needed to design corrective instruments and training to address all problems that contributed to the ESE teacher attrition rate.

Delimitations

Due to the scope of the project, delimitations were defined. The corrective program for the study was limited to the site school because implementation of a retention program addressed needs specific to the ESE teachers at that school. The plan was not designed to increase retention of those ESE teachers who were leaving their positions due to circumstances uncontrollable by the school district, such as child rearing, illness, and out-of-state relocation.

Summary

The researcher used the ideas of Kouzes and Posner (2002) and designed a staff development program that established a framework to increase the retention of ESE

teachers at the site school. The Staff Development Program was designed to provide the teachers with the necessary tools and information to become more effective ESE teachers by increasing their skill in ESE documentation, knowledge of teaching strategies, and access to curricular resources. This required the ESE teachers at the site school to move in a new direction of change.

The mission focused on ameliorating the increasing attrition rate of ESE teachers at the site school. The researcher devised a procedure by which to teach the ESE teachers proper procedures and provide support where needed. The researcher provided moral support for the ESE teachers as a means to increase their retention. Training and development sessions were designed to increase the teachers' competence levels and professional self-esteem. A mentor was assigned to the teachers to provide them with support similar to that of a buddy system so that they no longer felt isolated but, instead, had someone from whom to seek assistance and emotional support.

The ultimate desired result was to retain the ESE teachers by empowering them with knowledge and a sound support system. The researcher studied the ESE teacher attrition problem that existed at site school and gathered additional data from former ESE teachers throughout the school district.

The areas in which the teachers required training were determined by the need assessment questionnaire and were divided into three workshops. The researcher designed training sessions with assistance from both the formative committee members and the summative committee members. The site school's resource teacher, along with the researcher, delivered the trainings to the ESE teachers who were employed at the school during the 2004-2005 school year. The site school's resource teacher, a former ESE teacher, was designated to conduct the delivery of the training sessions to newly

hired new ESE teachers during preplanning of the 2005-2006 school year. During the first training session, Workshop 1, the ESE teachers received training in developing quality IEPs. As a result of the IEP training workshop, the ESE teachers had knowledge with which to compose IEPs properly. The researcher arranged for the teachers to receive additional training through Workshop 2. In Workshop 3, an in-depth overview of ESE policies and procedures was delivered. The researcher arranged for mentors for the ESE teachers during Workshop 4.

Whitaker (2002) reported,

> The Council for Exceptional Children . . . identified five purposes of a mentorship program for special educators: (a) facilitate and apply knowledge and skills, (b) convey advance knowledge and skills, (c) assist timely acculturation to the school climate, (d) reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction, and (e) support professionalism induction. (p. 547)

Evaluation

Research has shown that "administrators should conduct periodic needs assessments to see if administrators provide the type of support that teachers believe is important" (Bender et al., 2002, p. 41). Prior to implementation of the plan, surveys were given to the teachers in the ESE department. The first survey, the ESE Support/Need Survey for ESE teachers at the site school, provided insight into the needs of the ESE teachers at the site school and their perceptions of support given. The second survey assessed the teachers' knowledge of ESE policies and procedures. Throughout the implementation, the teachers were closely monitored and mentored. While the implementations took place, question-and-answer sessions were held for the entire ESE department. At the conclusion of the program the two surveys were readministered to the ESE teachers. Each workshop was evaluated by the participants.

Bennis and Goldsmith (1997) found that "the manager imitates; the leader

originates" (p. 10). The researcher's objective was to originate a system to reduce the feelings of incompetence and isolation in the ESE department of the site high school. The researcher used Kouzes and Posner's (2002) methodology to enable others to act.

Rossett (1999) found that "watched people at work provide information about the nature of the work and what may drive or impede effective performance" (p. 92). Throughout the process, the ESE teachers were surveyed and observed. Feedback was accepted from all the surveyed teachers. The researcher utilized Kouzes and Posner's (2002) Encourage the Heart ideology. Constructive feedback was taken into consideration, and changes were made accordingly. A formative assessment was used throughout the implementation.

Chapter 4: Results

Twenty-two surveys were distributed at the site school. Twenty site school ESE teachers completed and returned surveys for a 90.9% rate of participation (see table).

Table

Survey Sample Sizes and Response Rates

Type	Requested (*n*)	Received (*n*)	Rate (%)
ESE Support/Need Survey	22	20	90.90
The Policies and Procedures Survey	22	20	90.90
Teachers Who No Longer Teach ESE	112	5	0.04

Research Questions

The research that was conducted was based on seven questions that focused on factors that contribute to the retention and attrition rates of ESE teachers. The 20 site school ESE teachers answered a variety of survey questions on the ESE Support/Need Survey for ESE teachers at the site school to describe why ESE teachers left or would leave the field of ESE. For each question, the respondents were asked to answer each statement with *always*, *sometimes,* or *never.*

Results of ESE Support/Need Survey for ESE Teachers at the Site School

Research Question 1. What factors lead to exceptional student educators' intent to leave the field of ESE? Analysis of survey responses showed that Statements 4-7 on the ESE Support/Need Survey applied. In terms of believing that the position is stressful (Statement 4), 5 of the 20 participants responded *always,* and 15 of the 20 participants responded *sometimes.* Not a single ESE teacher at the site school responded that his or

her position is never stressful. In response to Statement 5, "I feel isolated in my position without assistance," 15 respondents selected *sometimes,* and 5 respondents selected *never*. One of the 20 participants responded that he or she always has the clerical assistance and resource support that are needed to carry out the job effectively (Statement 6). Nine participants stated that assistance and resources were sometimes available, and the remaining 10 of the 20 teachers responded that resources were never available. In response to being "too overwhelmed to be committed to their job in terms of pursuing additional training" (Statement 7) in order to continue teaching ESE, 7 participants responded *always,* 11 participants responded *sometimes,* and 2 participants responded *never*.

Research Question 2. What are the greatest determinants to exceptional student educators staying in the field of ESE? Survey Statements 8-13 addressed this research question. In response to Statement 8, "I'm supported by other ESE teachers," 10 of the 20 participants responded *sometimes.* Nine of the site school ESE teachers responded *always,* and only 1 teacher responded *never.* In response to Statement 9, "I am supported by general education teachers (non-ESE teachers)," 17 participants responded *sometimes*, 2 participants responded *always,* and 1 participants responded *never.* In answer to Statement 10, "I feel accepted by general education teachers," 14 participants responded *sometimes*, and 6 participants responded *always.* Fifteen of the teachers replied that they sometimes feel confident in their knowledge of legal requirements (Statement 11), 4 teachers responded *always,* and 1 teacher responded *never*.

Statement 12 was "I'm confident of my knowledge of instructional methodologies to use in teaching ESE students." Eleven of the 20 respondents responded *always,* 8 of the 20 respondents responded *sometimes,* and 1 respondent responded *never.* Ten of the

respondents always felt confident in their knowledge of classroom management strategies (Statement 13), 9 of the 20 felt confident sometimes, and 15 respondents never felt confident.

Research Question 3. What can school districts do to prepare inexperienced ESE teachers to meet the demands of ESE positions? Survey Statements 2 and 3 addressed this research question. In response to Statement 2, "I feel that the district offers appropriate professional development training sessions that relate to ESE teachers," 14 of the 20 teachers at the site school responded *sometimes* and 6 responded *always.* In response to Statement 3, "I am able to attend district professional development training sessions," 14 responded *sometimes,* 2 responded *always,* and 4 responded *never.*

Research Question 4. What are the characteristics of an effective retention program for ESE teachers? Survey Question 17 required teachers to list traits that would enhance an ESE department. Teachers listed the following as being necessary for an effective ESE program: (a) supportive ESE department head; (b) supportive ESE specialist; (c) team effort, support; (d) more time to complete paperwork; (e) support from other ESE teachers; (f) mentors for beginning teachers; (g) a leadership team that listens to the students; (h) strong teachers; and (i) student-centered, dedicated teachers.

Research Question 5. How should an ESE retention program be implemented and evaluated? Both ESE teachers at the site school and the literature that was reviewed suggested that continuous support and feedback are essential to an effective retention program. The teachers responded to Survey Question 8, "I'm supported by other ESE teachers." Nine of the participants responded *always,* 10 participants responded *sometimes,* and 1 participant responded *never.* Survey Question 9 was "I'm supported by non ESE teachers in terms of their following though with recommendations to adapt

curriculum or teaching methodologies for mainstreamed ESE students." Two teachers responded *always*, 17 responded *sometimes,* and 1 responded *never.* In response to Survey Question 19, "What should we do differently?" teachers requested more support and evaluations of individual teaching techniques for improvement.

Research Question 6. What changes, if any, should be considered for the ESE department at the site school? Survey Questions 15, 16, 18, and 19 addressed this research question. The teachers were asked to rate the ESE department at the site school on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best score (Question 15). The site school's ESE teachers responded with ratings of 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. The mean score was 8. In response to Question 16, "Are you currently satisfied with the department?" 12 participants responded "yes" and 8 participants responded "no."

In response to Question 19, "What should we do differently?" the respondents gave the following suggestions: (a) provide money for materials and supplies; (b) make use of electronic IEPs; (c) provide training for teachers; (d) require written lesson plans to be submitted; (e) monitor instruction daily; (f) provide more frequent evaluations on teaching techniques, classroom atmosphere, and content; (g) hold ESE teachers accountable when paperwork is not completed; (h) supply additional compensation to ESE teachers and give them an additional period of planning time to complete IEPs; (i) exempt ESE teachers from having a duty period; (j) fill one instructional ESE position with an individual to process paperwork full time; and (k) improve communication between district-level ESE supervisors and school-based ESE teachers by explaining the reasons behind the pop-up deadlines with so little time to complete requested tasks.

Research Question 7. What leadership role should the school's leadership team play in a teacher support and retention program to support teachers--particularly ESE

teachers--effectively so that ESE teachers have the resources and tools that are needed to perform quality teaching? Responses to Survey Questions 1 and 17 provided feedback on how the site school ESE teachers viewed the support provided by the leadership team. Fifty percent of the teachers responded that the leadership team is sometimes supportive of the ESE teachers (Statement 1). In Statement 17, one ESE teacher responded that the assistant principal of curriculum listens to the needs of the ESE teachers. Another teacher responded to Statement 17 that the leadership team places ESE teachers in closets to teach and is insensitive to ESE teachers when creating the master schedule.

Results of Survey of Teachers Who No Longer Teach ESE

The purpose of this survey was to gain feedback from former ESE teachers relative to the reasons that led to decisions to no longer teach in the field of ESE. The survey was designed to elicit those of the concerns and needs of the ESE teachers that went unaddressed. In addition, the survey asked the former ESE teachers to comment on things that would have led to the teachers' remaining ESE teachers. The survey contained 17 questions. Teachers were asked to respond with *always, sometimes,* or *never.*

One hundred twelve former local school district ESE teachers were contacted by e-mail and either mailed or delivered a survey to their then-current place of employment. Five of the 112 former ESE teachers completed and returned surveys. An additional 60 surveys were returned blank. The remaining surveys were not returned.

In an attempt to receive a more favorable return rate from the surveys, the researcher (a) made telephone calls, (b) e-mailed requests, and (c) drove to the school sites. In addition, department heads and ESE specialists at the schools in which the participants worked were contacted in hopes of achieving a better response rate. Each survey included a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. In spite of repeated attempts

made by the researcher, only 5 completed surveys were returned.

Because the rate of return from the former ESE teachers was so low, the researcher did not report the survey results. The results from the 5 participants did not depict those of a truly representational sample of the district's former ESE teachers. The results, if included, may have been misleading. Important information is provided by sample size calculations.

The following are comments the former ESE teachers provided as reasons they were no longer teaching ESE (in answer to Statement 14): (a) too much paperwork, (b) lack of commitment and support from non ESE teachers and administrators to exhaust all possibilities in accommodating ESE students, (c) poor or no resources to create a diverse learning environment that enhances knowledge and facilities, (d) unit loss, (e) and constant addition of procedures and activities to be followed without deletion of activities or procedures. The following are things the former ESE teachers listed that would have led to their remaining ESE teachers (in answer to Statement 15): (a) reduced or eliminated paperwork, (b) increased pay and greater efforts toward teamwork in order to reach the main goal, (c) increased preparation of each ESE student for life inside and outside the classroom while meeting their individual needs, (d) more recognition and respect, (e) additional time to complete paperwork, (f) increased numbers of assistant teachers to assist with students, (g) and increased access to materials for teaching.

Results of Policies and Procedures Survey

The purpose of The Policies and Procedures Survey was to identify areas wherein the ESE teachers at the site school would benefit the most from staff development activities. The participants were asked to rate their knowledge or ability level in regard to the items that were listed on the survey. The following scale was used: 1 = *not familiar or*

not proficient, 2 = *somewhat familiar or somewhat proficient*, and 3 = *very familiar or very proficient.*

Survey Item 1 addressed methods to include parents. Survey Item 4 addressed educational performance data. Survey Item 5 addressed educational performance narrative, which included the following: (a) results of recent test scores, (b) summary of goals that were mastered and not mastered, and (c) priority educational goals.

Survey Item 6 addressed the ability to write measurable goals. Survey Item 7 addressed the ability to write short-term goals. Survey Item 8 addressed knowledge of evaluation plans. Survey Item 9 addressed ESE accommodations. Survey Item 10 addressed behavioral supports and FBA/BIPs. Survey Item 11 addressed support for school personnel. Survey Item 12 addressed special education services. Survey Item 13 addressed services related to individuals with disabilities. Survey Item 14 addressed district and state assessments. Survey Item 15 addressed knowledge of special considerations. Survey Item 16 addressed knowledge of least restrictive environment. Survey Item 17 addressed knowledge of diploma options. Survey Item 18 addressed knowledge of assistive technology. Survey Item 19 addressed knowledge of modifications. Survey Item 20 addressed knowledge of collaboration methods. Survey Item 21 addressed knowledge of consultation logs.

In survey Item 22, teachers were asked “In what areas would you like to receive more training in regarding procedures, rules, and policies in order to help you be a better ESE instructor?” The teachers listed the following areas: (a) functional behavioral assessment; (b) transition services; (c) postschool options; (d) technology; and (e) content areas, agencies, and diploma options.

These survey responses provided insights into the status of the ESE teachers’

needs at the site school. They were shared with the formative committee. The responses were used as a guide by the researcher in developing the content of the Staff Development Program and reviewed by the summative committee. The results of the Procedures and Policies Survey are shown in Appendix G.

Teachers reported not being knowledgeable about the steps for completing an IEP. On Monday, May 16, 2005, an IEP training session was delivered to the ESE teachers at the site high school. The training walked the teachers through the steps of completing an IEP. The training was offered as a one-day session through mini faculty meetings each 55-minute period block. The training explained the process of inviting the parents and composing an IEP page by page. The teachers were given a sample completed IEP to refer to when writing IEPs. At the conclusion of the IEP training session, the teachers were informed of the Quality IEP training that was offered by the school district through the staff development office. Via the staff development response sheet, the teachers stated that the session was informative, but additional time and practice were required in order to grasp the concept of writing the IEP and to understand the process fully.

On Tuesday, May 17, 2005, the teachers were walked through a completed FBA/BIP. Each portion of the FBA/BIP was explained to the ESE teachers. Questions and concerns that related to the FBA/BIP were addressed. The teachers were then given a blank FBA/BIP along with the description of a student who exhibited an inappropriate behavior and were asked to take the form home and completely fill out the blank FBA/BIP independently.

On Wednesday, May 18, 2005, a third workshop, titled ESE Policies and Procedures, was held. The purpose of this workshop was to answer teachers' questions.

There was no agenda for the session. The resource teacher, who was a former ESE teacher, and the researcher answered questions that related to (a) completing ESE documents, (b) locating certain items at the school, (c) contacting appropriate personnel for different ESE documents and questions, and (d) locating students at the school. Verbal acknowledgement indicated that the session was helpful.

The results of the ESE Support/Need Survey revealed that the teachers would benefit from a support system. Fifteen teachers responded that they sometimes felt isolated, and isolation was identified in the literature as a contributing factor in teacher attrition. Implementation of a mentoring program was a valid strategy to incorporate into the retention program for the ESE instructors at the site.

The researcher arranged a fourth and final session, a mentoring workshop. On Monday, May 23, 2005, from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m., a mentoring workshop was given, and each teacher was assigned a mentor or at least offered the services of a mentor. The teachers were asked to reflect and to think of an individual who provided them with guidance and knowledge when they were between the ages of 12 and 16 years. The reflection led into statistics on the benefits of mentoring. The session ended with the teachers being assigned a mentor. The mentors, experienced ESE teachers, were assigned by exceptionality. The goal was to assign each teacher a mentor who taught students with the same exceptionality. According to the verbal responses and staff response forms, the teachers found the mentoring session helpful, and they looked forward to working with the mentors.

Weekly professional development sessions were scheduled for the remainder of the school year. The ESE teachers were promised 2 days of substitute coverage to enable them to shadow experienced ESE teachers or to complete ESE documents. Support--in

the forms of a mentor, an administrator, and a department head--is readily available to assist the ESE teachers as needed.

The validity of the Staff Development Program was determined through a group effort. The ESE teachers evaluated the workshops, and the results of the evaluations were used to arrange additional support in the forms of contacts and supplies. The teachers stated that the workshops were quite beneficial and long overdue. The formative and summative committee members reviewed the evaluations of each workshop and provided recommendations for improvements. These recommendations included lengthening the sessions to as much as a full day for each training session. The ESE teachers also recommended that the training be held at the beginning of each school year rather than at end of the year.

The workshops and the assignment of a mentor proved to be advantageous. Throughout the implementation of the retention program, no ESE teacher left the ESE department of the site high school. One first-year ESE teacher stated, “It is about time someone taught us something around here.” Another ESE teacher commented, “The implementation should have taken place at the beginning of the school year, and . . . the ESE teachers wouldn’t have been so incompetent and uncomfortable in regards to ESE policies and procedures.”

Because the number of teachers who were allowed to enroll in district ESE training sessions was limited, the teachers had not been able to participate in the district training staff development sessions. When the teachers at the site school received notice of the trainings, 2 weeks after the district posted the trainings on the staff development training enrollment site, training sessions for the months of September and October were filled to capacity.

An additional ESE teacher was hired for the 2005-2006 school year. Five weeks into the 2005-2006 school year, one ESE teacher left the school district altogether to become self-employed. The researcher was pleased by the efforts and results of the program. At the time of this writing, no other ESE teacher had left the ESE department of the site high school.

Summary

The results of this applied dissertation research identified needs and concerns of then-current ESE teachers, areas in which ESE teachers at the site school would benefit from training, and reasons why former ESE teachers were no longer teaching ESE. The researcher analyzed the results of the surveys and designed a staff development retention program for ESE teachers at the site school. The teachers were provided training in completion of ESE documents and assigned mentors to assist with situations as needed.

The goal of the Staff Development Program was to build a committed and highly qualified ESE department. From the initiation through the completion of the implementation, none of the teachers left the ESE department of the site school. At the time of this writing, the department had the characteristics of a highly qualified ESE department. The teachers were experienced with ESE students and experienced in ESE policies and procedures, and they were looking forward to remaining at the site school. The implementation and evaluations were approved by both committees.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purposes of this applied dissertation project were to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that lead to retention of ESE teachers and of what role leaders play at the school level in influencing quality teachers to remain in the field of education and to use this knowledge to accomplish the following:

1. To research reasons why teachers new to the site school's ESE department left the department.

2. To generate a clear understanding of the needs and stressors of ESE teachers at the site school.

3. To identify components of quality mentoring and support programs that can be implemented at the site school.

4. To develop a retention program.

5. To evaluate the effectiveness of the developed program.

The participants in the study included 20 of the 22 ESE teachers at the site school. Five of the 112 former ESE teachers who were identified by district office personnel completed and returned surveys. The former ESE teachers were contacted by e-mail and were either mailed or delivered a survey at their then-current place of employment. A small percentage of nonsite school teachers responded. Ninety percent of the site school ESE teachers participated. The data from the surveys were analyzed and compiled using a logico-inductive process.

Elaboration and Interpretation of Results

Research Question 1. What factors lead to exceptional student educators' intent to leave the field of ESE? These factors were gleaned through review of the literature and survey of teachers who left their ESE teaching positions. The survey indicated that

several factors contributed to ESE teachers leaving their positions. Results of the survey indicated that stress was a contributing factor to ESE teachers' leaving their positions. All respondents stated that their position was either sometimes or always stressful. Not a single teacher at the site school responded that his or her position was never stressful.

Feelings of isolation appeared to contribute to ESE teachers' leaving their positions, as well. Seventy-five percent of the teachers stated that they felt isolated in their positions. Not having clerical assistance and resource support appeared to have a negative effect on teacher retention. Ninety-five percent of the teachers stated that clerical assistance and resource supports were not available. Teachers were too overwhelmed to be committed to their jobs in terms of pursuit of additional training in order to continue teaching ESE. This appeared to be a contributing factor to teachers' leaving their positions.

Nichols and Sosnowsky (2002) stated that teachers who reported leaving the field stressed that teacher education programs at the universities did not prepare them to handle day-to-day situations. Similarly, Billingsley (2004) reported that teacher attrition in the early years was due to challenging assignments coupled with the teachers' being new and inexperienced and lacking adequate training. In addition, Billingsley stated, "Special education attrition and retention research showed that work environments were important to teachers' job satisfaction and subsequent career decision" (p. 44). Billingsley et al. (2004) wrote that challenging assignments in the early years of teaching coupled with inadequate supports contributed to a high attrition rate.

Deteriorated working conditions have discouraged new recruits from the teaching profession ("New Study," 2002). Analysis of data from the site school's ESE teachers need survey (see Appendix B) showed that the administrators needed to realize the many

additional tasks that are required of ESE teachers without additional compensation. ESE teachers at the site school commented that district-level ESE administrators needed to reflect and remember what it is like being an ESE teacher.

Research Question 2. What are the greatest determinants to exceptional student educators staying in the field of ESE? Information was obtained through review of the literature and input from ESE teachers who remained in ESE teaching positions. Comments that were made on the survey that was given to the teachers who left teaching ESE showed that the reasons for leaving included (a) too much paperwork, (b) lack of commitment and support from non-ESE teachers and administrators to exhaust all possibilities in accommodating ESE students, (c) poor or no resources to create a diverse learning environment that enhances knowledge and facilities, (d) unit loss, and (e) constant addition of procedures and activities to be followed without deletion of activities and procedures. Elimination of these contributing factors would be strong determinants to teachers who are leaving.

Research findings reported similar reasons for teachers' leaving the teaching profession. Certo and Fox (2002) stated that job satisfaction and retention of teachers was linked to the quality of the work environment and reported three main reasons teachers stayed in the education profession: (a) commitment to the profession, (b) supportive administrative staff, and (c) an appreciation for relationship with colleagues.

Research Question 3. What can school districts do to prepare inexperienced ESE teachers to meet the demands of ESE positions? The information was obtained through review of literature of district programs that were designed to support ESE teachers and through review of intended purposes of district staff development training for ESE teachers.

Research has shown that beginning ESE teachers need to feel supported with school-related tasks and issues (Mastropieri, 2001). Certo and Fox (2002) reported that first-year teachers felt isolated behind classroom doors and that long- and short-range planning assistance proved to be beneficial in the early years of teaching. McLeskey et al. (2004) stated that school districts could "improve the qualifications of special education teachers through professional development and increasing salaries" (p. 12). Billingsley et al. (2004) reported, "Beginning teachers who are given reasonable assignments, receive helpful feedback, and are provided with personal supports were more likely to acquire the skills needed for a satisfying teaching career and to develop greater commitment to teaching" (p. 334).

Survey responses showed that the district did not always offer appropriate professional development training sessions that related to ESE teachers. Only 30% of the respondents at the site school believed that appropriate training sessions were always available; therefore, it is necessary for schools in the district to accomplish the short- and long-term planning and assistance that were identified in the research and to develop their own staff development programs for new ESE teachers.

Research Question 4. What are the characteristics of an effective retention program for ESE teachers? The characteristics were obtained through study of mentoring and other teacher-retention programs. The literature that was reviewed showed that alternative forms of professional development may facilitate teachers' active participation and address teachers' question about practices, including "(a) action researching, (b) experimenting, (c) reflecting, (d) collaborating, (e) modeling, (f) coaching, (g) problem solving, (h) observing, (i) mentoring, (j) studying students [*sic*] work, and (k) participating in study groups" (Lang & Fox, 2004, p. 167). Billingsley et al. (2004)

reported that “researchers have called for induction programs that serve to both retain new teachers and foster teacher learning and growth” (p. 344). First-year teachers view informal support as being valuable (Billingsley et al.). Survey responses also showed a need for collaboration, coaching, and learning about specific ESE issues.

Research Question 5. How should an ESE retention program be implemented and evaluated? The researcher analyzed the information from survey data that were obtained from teacher input and the literature review to design an ESE teacher-retention program to meet the needs of the ESE teachers at the site school. Program evaluation Web sites were used as a guide to design an appropriate evaluation plan to evaluate the implemented retention plan.

The research review showed that a retention program should provide continuous support and constant feedback (Lang & Fox, 2004). Research by Lang and Fox revealed that a variety of strategies that allow educators to share experiences and successful techniques should be considered in coordination of professional development activities for teachers. Lang and Fox reported that professional development strategies should facilitate active participation and provide teachers with feedback, support, and follow-up to ensure effectiveness. They stated that the learning styles of the teachers should be taken into consideration in planning for professional development.

Research Question 6. What changes, if any, should be considered for the ESE department at the site school? This information was obtained through surveys and literature review. Then-current and former ESE teachers were asked to provide information regarding needed changes. Answers to Research Question 6 were outlined in responses to survey questions on the ESE support/need survey for ESE teachers at the site school (see Appendix B). The teachers responded that changes were needed in the ESE

department at the site school and that the primary change should address paperwork-related issues, including distribution of paperwork, processing of paperwork, and reduction of paperwork. Comments also showed that a support system linked to frequent evaluations is desired. When the teachers were asked "What is not working in the ESE department?" they responded that there is a lack of individualized accountability.

Over the past 10 years, workplace conditions have comprised one of the major contributing "factors related to teacher attrition in special education" (Brownell et al. 2002, p. 2). The researcher suggested to the ESE department head at the site school that a system of checks and balances be implemented in regard to the paperwork. The researcher suggested that the department head should distribute the case manager's caseloads as evenly as possible. The even distribution of caseloads would even the number the IEPs each ESE teacher has to complete. The researcher recommended that paperwork tasks be shared with the paraprofessional. Such tasks as printing student schedules and filing documents can be carried out by the paraprofessionals. By using the paraprofessional to carry out the noninstructional tasks, the ESE teachers lighten their responsibilities related to paperwork.

Research Question 7. What leadership role should the school's leadership team play in a teacher support and retention program to support teachers--particularly ESE teachers--effectively so that ESE teachers have the resources and tools that are needed to perform quality teaching? The researcher conducted a literature review, teacher surveys, and administrative reviews to obtain this information. The types of support that were provided by leadership teams in successful ESE programs were analyzed. Answers to Research Question 7 were extracted from survey responses.

Survey responses from the ESE teachers suggested that the leadership team

should be supportive of ESE teachers' needs by listening to their concerns. Site school ESE teachers wished for the leadership team to be sensitive to them when creating the master schedules; the teachers wanted to be able to team up to plan as a group.

Similar to the survey responses, research revealed that ESE teachers believed that negotiation "with administrators was difficult" (Harper, 2000, p. 147). Teachers had difficulty defining administrative structures between the school and community. Certo and Fox (2002) stated that administrative support played a significant role in teacher retention.

Research has revealed that supportive leadership teams have a positive effect on increasing teacher retention (Certo & Fox, 2004). A nonsupportive leadership team may increase the attrition rate of teachers in the ESE department. Lang and Fox (2004) stated that "administrators who plan professional development experiences need to be aware of the instructional personnel needs" and plan accordingly (p. 169).

Gerstein, Keating, and Yovanoff (2001) stated that administrators could modify job designs to enhance teacher performance and should be certain that ESE teachers have available resources. Administrators should set a positive climate for the school as a whole and should reward "meritorious behaviors" (Gerstein et al., p. 3).

The survey responses indicated that the former ESE teachers lacked training opportunities and administrative support; therefore, the formative committee reviewed the retention program to ensure that these issues were addressed. The staff development activities were provided to the ESE teachers at the site school in three full-day sessions, mini faculty meetings, and 55-minute sessions. The teachers attended the staff development during teacher planning and conference time and during other time that was not scheduled for students. Support of a mentor was arranged through an additional

afterschool session, and administrative support was included in the program design.

Surveys were designed by the researcher to identify areas in which the site school ESE teachers would benefit from training. The participants ranked their knowledge and ability to follow policies and procedures on the following scale: 1 = *not familiar or not proficient,* 2 = *somewhat familiar or somewhat proficient,* and 3 = *very familiar or very proficient.* The researcher's analysis of survey data suggested that the instructors in the ESE department at the site school would benefit from training and development. As few as 5% and as many as 60% of the site school's ESE teachers rated their levels of knowledge and ability 2. At the *not familiar or not proficient* level as few as 5% but as many as 20% of the teachers rated their familiarity with certain procedures that are mandatory for ESE teachers to follow. The ESE teachers provided additional comments and requested training in the following areas: FBA/BIP completion, transition services, post school options, technology, content areas, agencies, and diploma options.

In summary, presurvey data showed that less than 65% of the site school's teachers were comfortable with their knowledge regarding--or ability to follow--any portion of ESE policies and procedures. The researcher noted that only 15% of the teachers were comfortable with their knowledge and ability in certain areas of policies and procedures. The researcher and committee members agreed that a staff development program that included instruction about ESE policies and procedures for carrying out ESE teaching responsibilities effectively was needed at the site school. In response to the surveys, literature review, and input from committee members, the researcher designed, implemented, and evaluated a staff development program for the site school ESE teachers.

After implementation, the researcher hoped that the ESE unit would become an

experienced, content group. Staff development training sessions were designed for the site school ESE teachers to gain knowledge of ESE policies and procedures. The researcher praised the teachers in the ESE department at every opportunity by giving them compliments to boost their motivation and to recognize a job well done.

Upon completion of the training, teachers replied that they had at least a working knowledge and ability to understand and complete required documents. The teachers stated that the staff development workshops would have been even more valuable if they had implemented at the beginning of the school year.

Conclusions

Responses to the surveys mirrored the information that was obtained from the review of literature. A supported and nurtured teaching environment is created by first paying attention to what teachers experience (Billingsley et al., 2004). Problems that place ESE teachers at risk for leaving their teaching positions include (a) limited access to materials, (b) classroom management difficulties, (c) tasks that interfere with teaching, (d) feelings of being excluded, and (e) principals who do not understand the field of special education (Billingsley et al.). Teachers stated a combination of issues that created a very stressful environment.

It is very important for school leadership teams to support ESE teachers. "New Study" (2002), Billingsley et al. (2004), and Billingsley (2004) reported that inadequate resources and low salaries contributed to ESE teacher attrition, and these were also contributing factors at the site school.

Teachers stated that ESE teachers should receive additional pay for the additional responsibilities. Prior to the implementation, some ESE teachers felt confused about policies and procedures. In addition, some ESE teachers felt isolated in their positions

without getting the assistance they needed.

A committee composed of ESE district administrators and school-based ESE teachers that would meet monthly to discuss issues and concerns would improve the communication among district-level ESE personnel and school-based ESE teachers (K. Williams, personal communication, February 26, 2005). This team design would allow the team to align goals that accommodate school needs, as well. At the monthly meetings, the teachers could address in an open forum the concerns that surround the ESE department at the school and the team could devise a plan of corrective actions immediately. Providing school-level ESE teachers hands-on participation in the design of the corrective action plan enables the team to include the needs of the school in addition to the district goals that align with state policies and procedures.

Implication of Findings

The committee members and the researcher agreed that being competent in ESE policies and procedures is essential to effectiveness of ESE teachers in the classroom. It is also essential to reduction of their stress level.

Black (2004) reported that a veteran teacher blamed herself because she never had time to devote to her students. The veteran teacher described being

> haunted by a feeling of dissatisfaction . . . [and] . . . a sense of failure. . . . Students [*sic*] learning suffered, and achievement went down . . . [because of] . . . stressed-out teachers who succumbed to emotional and physical exhaustion, developed negative attitudes toward students and colleagues, and performed below par in the classroom. (Black, pp. 30-31)

A decrease in achievement is not the only result of dissatisfied teachers. As Black (2004) stated, "Schools also faced costs associated with recruited and replaced burned-out teachers who opted to leave the profession altogether" (p. 31).

All students, including students with disabilities, deserve a quality education.

Beginning ESE teachers are expected to carry out the same tasks as experienced ESE teachers with little or no training. Providing support to new teachers directly affects the quality of the education that is delivered by the teacher to the student.

A review of the literature suggested that the nationwide shortage of ESE teachers continues to grow. The school district and the site school face similar problems with ESE teachers. One way the school district has attempted to combat the problem is through the Alternative Certification Program (K. Williams, personal communication, February 26, 2005), which allows degreed individuals to teach while earning ESE certification.

The development and implementation of the retention program have established a foundation for a successful learning environment. All ESE teachers returned to their respective ESE positions. The retention program trained beginning ESE teachers and provided an update on compliance with ESE policies and procedures for experienced ESE teachers. The program had a successful outcome. Throughout the program implementation, no ESE teachers resigned from their positions.

Recommendations

The researcher hopes to have created a staff development program that can be updated and evaluated continuously at the site school. It is recommended that the implementation phase of the program be reviewed to ensure that the format that is used to deliver the staff development activities is appropriate. It is also recommend that the length of the IEP and FBA/BIP workshops be increased to full-day training sessions and that the sessions be conducted at the beginning of the school year, possibly during teacher preplanning. The preplanning workshops will serve to develop beginning ESE teachers and to refresh experienced ESE teachers.

The researcher recommends survey of the ESE teachers at least once each

semester and improvement of the ESE department according to the needs identified from the survey responses. It is also recommended that study of means by which to reduce the vast amounts of paperwork that are required of ESE teachers be continued. Research should be conducted to address and alleviate the redundant paperwork tasks. ESE teachers should be interviewed for specific suggestions for the reduction of the paperwork load. The suggestion to hire one teacher solely for paperwork purposes should be considered--it deserves further investigation.

It is also recommended that interviews concerning additional training that is needed by both ESE-certified and non-ESE-certified teachers be conducted each semester. It is also recommended that another attempt be made to survey the former ESE teachers in hopes of obtaining a greater participation rate. Former ESE teachers are an excellent source of input into retention strategies of ESE teachers.

The site school should consider the following:

1. Make an effort to ensure that ESE teachers have a reasonable caseload of students.

2. Eliminate tasks of no value to ESE teachers and students.

3. Include ESE teachers in the decision-making processes of professional tasks, especially ESE tasks.

4. Continue to provide ESE teachers with the necessary training and support to maximize quality productivity, beginning with the training that was designed in accordance with the results of analysis of the data that were retrieved from surveys. Each workshop and all training should be evaluated for improvement. Administrators should also look into ways to make certain that the teachers from the site school are able to enroll in the training that is provided through the district staff development office.

5. Attempt to create a school climate that values all teachers and their work. The climate should foster a sense of belonging and should create and maintain a stress-free environment.

6. Continue to address the training needs of the ESE department as they arise.

7. Consider providing monetary supplements to ESE teachers.

The recommendations are made with hopes of increasing ESE teacher retention. Unfavorable workplace conditions, low salaries, and feelings of isolation were identified as leading factors contributing to the attrition rate of ESE teachers. It is assumed that, as inefficient working conditions are continually addressed and corrected, the ESE teachers at the site school will be retained.

The researcher expects that, over time the novice ESE teachers will become experienced in ESE policies and procedures. Mentors will be used to provide continuous support to the ESE teachers. Mentors will be available at the site high school daily to assist the teachers as needed and will meet outside of normal school hours with their mentees at least twice a month. Refresher sessions will be scheduled for the teachers so that the learned knowledge is retained.

References

Bender, W., Fore, C., III, & Martin, C. (2002). Teacher burnout in special education: The causes and the recommended solutions [Electronic version]. *The High School Journal, 86*(1), 36-44. Retrieved February 16, 2003, from ProQuest database.

Bennis, W., & Goldsmith, J. (1997). *Learning to lead*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.

Billingsley, B. (2004). Special education teacher retention and attrition: A critical analysis of the research literature. *The Journal of Special Education, 38,* 39-55.

Billingsley, B., Carlson, E., & Klein, S. (2004). The working conditions and induction support of early career special educators [Electronic version]. *Exceptional Children, 70,* 333-347. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Bittel, M., & Flickinger, J. (2001, October). Debate: Should staff in tougher schools get higher pay? [Electronic version]. *NEA Today 20,* 2. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Black, S. (2004, January). Stroking stressed-out teachers [Electronic version]. *The Education Digest, 69*(5), 28. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Boyer, L., & Gillespie, P. (2000). Keeping the committed: The importance of induction and support programs for new special educators [Electronic version]. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 33*(1), 10-15. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from http://www.specialedcareers.org/pdf/keepcomm.pdf

Brownell, M., Hirsch, E., & Seo, S. (2004). Meeting the demand for highly qualified special education teachers during severe shortages: What should policymakers consider? [Electronic version]. *The Journal of Special Education, 38,* 56-61. Retrieved September 16, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Brownell, M., Sindelair, P., Bishop, A., Langley, L., & Seo, S. (2002). Special education teacher supply and teacher quality: The problems, the solutions [Electronic version]. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 35*(2), 1-16. Retrieved October 6, 2004, from WilsonWeb database.

Certo, J., & Fox, J. (2002). Retaining quality teachers [Electronic version]. *The High School Journal, 86*(1), 57-75. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from WilsonWeb database.

Deily, M. (2003, January 9). Mississippi [Electronic version]. *Education Week, 22,* 143-145. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Five steps to a living wage [Electronic version]. (2002, November). *NEA Today, 21,* 15. Retrieved July 7, 2005, from ProQuest database.

Gehring, J. (2003, January 9). New York [Electronic version]. *Education Week, 22,* 154. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Gerstein, R., Keating, T., & Yovanoff, P. (2001). Working in special education: Factors that enhances special educator's intent to stay. *Exceptional Children, 67,* 549-567.

Harper, H. (2000). There is no way to prepare for this: Teaching in First Nations schools in northern Ontario--Issues and concerns [Electronic version]. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 24*(2), 144-157. Retrieved February 16, 2003, from ProQuest database.

Hoffman, J. (2004). Teachers wanted: Hindy Katz loved being a teacher. Check that: She loved teaching [Electronic version]. *Today's Parent, 18*(8), 72. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Kaff, M. (2004). Multitasking is multitaxing: Why special educators are leaving the field [Electronic version]. *Preventing School Failure, 48*(2), 10-17. Retrieved September 16, 2004, from WilsonWeb database.

Keller, B. (2003, April 2). North Carolina teachers short on time, study finds [Electronic version]. *Education Week, 22,* 29. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2002). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lang, M., & Fox, C. (2004). Breaking with tradition: Providing effective professional development for instructional personnel supporting students with severe disabilities [Electronic version]. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 27*(2), 163-173. Retrieved September 16, 2004, from WilsonWeb database.

Mango, K. (2003, May 30). The great divide: Concerns grow over pay gaps between professional-school professors and everyone else [Electronic version]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 49*(38), 10. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i38/38a01001.htm

Mastropieri, M. (2001). Is the glass half full or half empty? Challenges encountered by first-year special education teachers [Electronic version]. *The Journal of Special Education, 35,* 66-74. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from WilsonWeb database.

McLeskey, J., Tyler, N., & Flippin, S. (2004). The supply of and demand for special education teachers: A review of research regarding the chronic shortage of special education teachers [Electronic version]. *The Journal of Special Education, 38,* 5-21. Retrieved September 16, 2004, from ProQuest database.

NEA: Teacher salaries barely keep pace with inflation [Electronic version]. (2002). *What Works in Teaching and Learning, 34*(8), 8.

New study finds new study finds teacher shortage caused by poor working conditions [Electronic version]. (2002). *United Nations Chronicle, 39*(4), 47. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2002/issue4/0402p46.html

Nichols, A., & Sosnowsky, F. (2002). Burnout among special education teachers in self-contained cross-categorical classrooms. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 25,* 71-86. Retrieved October 6, 2004, from WilsonWeb database.

Park, J. (2003, January 9). Deciding factors [Electronic version]. *Education Week, 22,* 17-18. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Protigal, S. (1999). *Public Law 94-142 (S. 6); Nov. 29, 1975: Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975.* Retrieved February 15, 2005, from http://asclepius.com/angel.special.html

Reid, K. (2003, January 9). Iowa [Electronic version]. *Education Week, 22,* 131-132. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from ProQuest database.

Renwick, L. (2001). More time = more pay? *Instructor, 111*(2), 8.

Rickey, K. (2003). *Special education due process hearings: Student characteristics, issues, and decisions.* Retrieved November 3, 2003, from http://www.nova.edu

Rossett, A. (1999). *First things fast*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer.

Russ, S., Chiang, B., Rylance, B., & Bongers, J. (2001). Caseload in special education: An integration of research findings [Electronic version]. *Exceptional Children, 67,* 161-172. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from WilsonWeb database.

Schulz, K., & Grimes, D. (2005). Epidemiology 1: Sample size and calculations in randomized trials mandatory and mystical [Electronic version]. *The Lancet, 365*(9467) 1348-1353. Retrieved September 15, 2005, from ProQuest database.

Westling, D., & Cooper-Duffy, K. (2003). The Western Carolina University Teacher Support Program: A multi-component program to improve and retain special educators [Electronic version]. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 26*(2), 154-158. Retrieved September 16, 2004, from WilsonWeb database.

Whitaker, S. (2002). Mentoring beginning special education teachers and the relationship to attrition. *Exceptional Children, 66,* 546-566. Retrieved September 16, 2004, from WilsoonWeb database.

Working conditions that work. (2004, April). *Education Week, 23,* 47.

Appendix A

Survey for Teachers Who No Longer Teach Exceptional Student Education

Survey for Teachers Who No Longer Teach ESE

The purpose of this survey is to gain feedback from ESE teachers related to their former jobs in order to address their concerns and needs. Please complete this brief questionnaire to help identify reasons why you are no longer teaching ESE so we can have a better understanding of the needs of ESE teachers in order to better support their needs.

Completing this questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes, and your answers remain strictly confidential. Your input will be greatly appreciated and helpful in developing an effective teacher support program for ESE teachers.

Please **do not** put your name on the questionnaire. The feedback obtained from this survey will be anonymous and kept confidential:

Please rate the following statements on the following scale:

A – Always S – Sometimes N – Never

I felt that administrators at my school supported ESE teachers.	A S N
I felt that the district offered appropriate professional development training sessions that relate to ESE teachers.	A S N
I felt that I was able to attend district professional development training sessions.	A S N
My position was very stressful.	A S N
I felt isolated in my position.	A S N
I didn't have the assistance in terms of clerical and resource support I needed to do my job effectively.	A S N
I felt that it was too overwhelming to be committed to my job in terms of pursuing additional training in order to keep updated on new laws and procedures in order to continue teaching ESE.	A S N
I wasn't supported by other ESE teachers.	A S N
I wasn't supported by non ESE teachers in terms of their following through with recommendations to adapt curriculum or teaching methodologies for mainstreamed ESE students.	A S N
I felt I wasn't accepted by non ESE teachers at my school.	A S

	N
I wasn't confident of my knowledgeable of the legal requirements associated with teaching ESE	A S N
I wasn't confident of my knowledge of instructional methodologies to use in teaching ESE students.	A S N
I wasn't confident of my knowledge of classroom management strategies to use in maintaining an orderly classroom and my ability to deal with behavioral problems associated with teaching ESE students.	A S N

14. Please comment on the reasons why you are no longer teaching ESE:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

15. Please comment on things that would have lead to your remaining an ESE teacher:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B

Exceptional Student Education Support Need Survey for Exceptional Student Education Teachers at the Site School

ESE Support/Need Survey for ESE Teachers at the Site School

The purpose of this survey is to gain feedback from ESE teachers related to your jobs in order to address their concerns and needs. The data received will be analyzed and used to create a program to support ESE teachers at our school.

Completing this questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes, and your answers remain strictly confidential. Your input will be greatly appreciated and helpful in developing an effective teacher support program for ESE teachers. Thank, you. Kanteasa Rowell

Please rate the following statements on the following scale:

A – Always S – Sometimes N – Never

I feel that the administrators at my school support ESE teachers.	A S N
I feel that the district offers appropriate professional development training sessions that relate to ESE teachers.	A S N
I am able to attend district professional development training sessions.	A S N
My position is very stressful.	A S N
I feel isolated in my position without assistance.	A S N
I don't have the assistance in terms of clerical and resource support I need to do my job effectively.	A S N
I feel that it is too overwhelming to be committed to my job in terms of pursuing additional training in order to keep updated on new laws and procedures in order to continue teaching ESE.	A S N
I'm supported by other ESE teachers.	A S N
I'm supported by non ESE teachers in terms of their following through with recommendations to adapt curriculum or teaching methodologies for mainstreamed ESE students.	A S N
I feel I'm accepted by non ESE teachers at my school.	A S N
I'm confident of my knowledgeable of the legal requirements associated with teaching ESE.	A S N

I'm confident of my knowledge of instructional methodologies to use in teaching ESE students.	A S N
I'm confident of my knowledge of classroom management strategies to use in maintaining an orderly classroom and my ability to deal with behavioral problems associated with teaching ESE students.	A S N
I plan to remain an ESE teacher.	A S N

How would you rate the ESE department at our school on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best score? _____

Are you currently satisfied with the department? ___Yes ___ No

What is working in the ESE Department?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What is not working in the ESE Department?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What should we do differently?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

Policies and Procedures Survey

The Policies and Procedures Survey

The purpose of this survey is to identify areas where ESE teachers at the site school would benefit from staff development activities. Please do not put your on this survey as all information should be anonymous and will be kept confidential.

Directions: Please rate your knowledge/ability level on the items listed below using the following scale:

(1) Not Familiar/Not Proficient
(2) Somewhat Familiar/Somewhat Proficient
(3) Very Familiar/Very Proficient

1. Methods to include parents.	1	2	3
2. Procedural Safeguards.	1	2	3
3. Transition/Post-School Outcome.	1	2	3
4. Educational Performance data.	1	2	3
5. Educational Performance Narrative.	1	2	3
6. Ability to write measurable goals.	1	2	3
7. Ability to write short- term goals.	1	2	3
8. Evaluation plans.	1	2	3
9. Accommodations.	1	2	3
10. Behavioral supports (FBA/BIP).	1	2	3
11. Support for school personnel.	1	2	3
12. Special education services.	1	2	3
13. Services related to individuals with disabilities.	1	2	3
14. District/state assessments.	1	2	3
15. Special considerations.	1	2	3
16. Least restrictive environments.	1	2	3
17. Diploma options.	1	2	3

18. Assistive technology.	1	2	3
19. Modifications.	1	2	3
20. Collaboration methods.	1	2	3
21. Consultation Logs.	1	2	3

22. What areas would you like to receive more training in regarding procedures, rules, and policies in order to help you be a better ESE instructor?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix D

Staff Development Program

Site School Staff Development Program

ESE Teacher Retention-Attrition Survey	Step 1
ESE Policies and Procedure Questionnaire	Step 2
Workshop 1 IEPS	Step 3
Workshop 2 MATRIX & FBA/BIP	Step 4
Workshop 3 ESE POLICIES & PROCEDURES	Step 5
Workshop 4 MENTORING	Step 6

Ongoing Professional Development/Training Sessions and Supports

Weekly developmental meetings with ESE specialist, department head, or administrator

First and third Tuesday of the month each mentor will meet with mentee and other times as requested or needed

Resources, materials and supplies will be provided to ESE teachers as needed

Monthly teacher development-training sessions will be held. Topics will be announced according to the needs of the developmental needs of the ESE teachers

Two full days of substitute coverage will be provided to the ESE Teachers by the administrative staff to allow participants to shadow experienced ESE teachers/mentors and to work complete assigned paperwork

The team of administrators offered an open door policy to teachers to discuss issues and address concerns

An administrator will hold monthly meetings to orient and assess the progress of new teachers

Appendix E

Training Workshop, Individualized Education Plan

IEP Workshop Agenda

May 16, 2005
Room K05

ACTIVITY: IEP Training Activity

OBJECTIVES:

- To provide an overview of the purpose of an IEP.
- To assist participants to begin to understand/review the steps in writing an IEP.

LENGTH: About 50 minutes

MATERIALS INCLUDED: Sample Completed IEP

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Pencils, notepad

STEPS:

1. Brief introductions.
2. Give brief overview of the purpose of an IEP.
3. Review the sample IEP in its entirety with program participants.
4. Have a question and answer session.
5. Evaluation.

Appendix F

Matrix-Functional Behavior Assessment-Behavior Intervention Plan Workshop Agenda

Matrix-FBA/BIP Workshop

May 17, 2005
Room K05

ACTIVITY: Completing a Matrix and a FBA/BIP

OBJECTIVES:

- To provide the purpose of and assist participants to grow comfortable in completing a Matrix. Step-by-step instructions are given.
- To provide the purpose of and assist participants to grow comfortable with completing a FBA/BIP. Step-by-step instructions are given.

LENGTH: About 50 minutes

MATERIALS: Blank Matrix, sample completed FBA/BIP, sample completed IEP

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Pen, notepad, sample IEP from IEP workshop

STEPS:

1. Introductions.
2. Give the purpose of completing a Matrix on each student in the ESE program.
3. Provide step-by-step instructions on completing a Matrix.
4. Ask teachers to complete blank Matrix as an independent assignment for sample IEP given in the IEP workshop.
5. Give the purpose of completing a FBA/BIP.
6. Provide step-by-step instructions on completing a FBA/BIP.
7. Go through each part of the completed sample FBA/BIP.
8. Hold a question and answer session.

Appendix G

Percentages of Participants Who Gave Each Response Related to Policies and Procedures on the Policies and Procedures Survey

Policy or procedure	Not familiar or not proficient	Somewhat familiar or somewhat proficient	Very familiar or very proficient
Methods to include parents	0	45	55
Procedural safeguards	5	45	50
Transition or postschool outcome	5	60	35
Educational performance data	0	45	55
Educational performance narrative	5	45	50
Ability to write measurable goal	0	35	65
Ability to write short-term goals	0	35	65
Evaluation plans	10	40	50
Accommodations	0	35	65
Behavioral supports (FBA/BIP)	20	65	15
Support for school personnel	15	45	40
Special education services	5	45	50
Services related to individuals with disabilities	10	45	45
District and state assessments	0	70	30
Special considerations	10	55	35
Least restrictive environments	0	25	75
Diploma options	0	25	75
Assistive technology	10	50	40
Modifications	5	45	50
Collaboration methods	0	50	50
Consultation logs	15	40	45

Appendix H

Policies and Procedures Agenda

Policies and Procedures Workshop
May 18, 2005
Room K05

ACTIVITY: QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION ON ESE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

OBJECTIVES:

To provide answers to questions and situations related to ESE policies and procedures.

LENGTH: About 50 minutes.

MATERIALS: Open minds with willingness to accept differences.

SUPPLIES NEEDED: pen, notebook

STEPS:

1. In a roundtable fashion ESE teachers ask questions on how to complete a task that the teacher had been struggling with.

2. The group participants share strategies on how the individuals were successful in completing the task.

3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until session is completed.

Appendix I

Benefits of Mentoring Workshop

Agenda for Mentoring Workshop
May 23, 2005
Room K05

ACTIVITY: BENEFITS OF MENTORING

OBJECTIVES:

- To share with teachers the benefits of having a mentor.
- To assign mentors to teachers as needed.

LENGTH: About 50 minutes

MATERIALS: Facts on mentoring

SUPPLIES: pen, notepad

STEPS:

1. Provide teachers with benefits of having a mentor.
2. Group discussion on mentoring.
3. Assign teachers a building level mentor.
4. Request a district level mentor for teachers as needed from area office.