

Stay or Leave? Factors Influencing the Retention of Teachers  
of Emotionally Disturbed in Southwestern Virginia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine if certified special education teachers who instruct emotionally disabled students experience the same barriers to retention when compared to other special educators. Also, this study answered the hypothesis whether significant relationships exist between the variables of staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support and teacher retention. One hundred forty two certified special education teachers from school districts in regions six and seven of southwestern Virginia completed a seventy-nine Likert style questionnaire for this study. Demographic profiles were outlined based on responses from special education teachers. Gender of participants was twenty-two males and seventy-eight females. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to validate predictor variables and aided in the development of the special education teacher survey. Principal component analysis interpreted the loadings of survey items on identified constructs. Results of the analysis revealed a strong correlation between the factors of Administrative Support, Compensation, Staff Development and the retention of special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students.

Fourteen percent of respondents chose to leave their positions compared to eighty-six percent who planned to stay. Findings indicated that administrative support, compensation, and staff development were the three most significant factors that influenced certified special educators' decisions to stay or leave their assigned positions. In addition, results of this study revealed that additional factors of student discipline, role conflict, stress and burnout, and workload were less significant, but were considered to have relevancy with minor roles towards a teacher's retention. It can be perceived that the three major constructs serve as a foundation that supports the four remaining individual constructs (stress and burnout, student discipline, role conflict and workload). These constructs were considered to be secondary underlying issues of teacher retention that surface and negatively impact teacher performance and job satisfaction, if not supported by the three major constructs over an extended period of time. Further, results confirmed that Administrative Support exhibited the strongest correlation among survey items and was found to have the most influence on the retention of special education teachers.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation would not be possible without the overwhelming love and support of my wife Sheanean. Who often took several steps backward so that I could move forward to complete this lifelong dream. Thank you for filling the void in my absence and doing what was necessary to meet the needs of our family. To my children Whitney, Dannielle, and Shaun; who gave me encouragement through love and support as we traveled this memorable path together. To my parents, who always remained in my corner. Although you live miles away, you always lifted me up and encouraged me to move forward to the finish line. To my brother and sisters, thank you for your encouragement and for letting me know that can make it. To my sister Regina, whose memory will forever be in my heart, this one is for you kid! Finally, to my grandmother, whose memory I will always cherish. You told me years ago to stay in school because you never had the opportunity. It was those words coupled with my own desire that provided me with comfort, as well as helped fuel my drive to complete this incredible journey.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Since the implementation of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (1975; P.L. 94-142), services have been provided to a number of children and youth under the disability category of emotional disturbance. However, recruiting and retaining qualified teachers of emotionally disturbed children has plagued school districts for years. The number of students identified as emotionally disturbed has increased and the pool of qualified teachers has decreased, creating a critical shortage of teachers (Wehby, Lane, & Falk, 2003).

According to the American Association for Employment in Education (2003), special educators, including teachers of the emotionally disturbed, are in greatest need in public schools today. These professionals work daily to deliver on the promises and requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997; P.L. 94-142), yet the complexities of the profession and other factors in the environment often inspire so that teachers leave early.

In order to meet the supply and demand of the field, many school districts look to increase resources and alter their recruiting procedures in order to improve personnel retention. According to Westat Research Corporation (2002), 16% of special education teachers who instruct students with emotional disturbances do not possess the state-required certification. In addition, teachers of students with emotional disturbances experience *burn out* at a faster pace when compared to other special educators (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).

Understanding why teachers leave is the first step in getting them to stay (Ingersoll, 2001). According to Ingersoll (2001), teachers leave when they encounter environments that lack essential professional supports that include: (1) support from school leadership; (2) organizational structures and workforce conditions that convey respect and value for them; and (3) induction and mentoring programs for new and experienced teachers.

According to various researchers (Billingsley, Fall, & Williams, 2006; Bullock & Wilson., 1994, Cooley-Nichols, 2004), in order to close the gap of teacher shortages in the field of special education, especially for the teachers working with students with emotional disturbances, *trickle-down effect* of accountability is needed. This effect must flow from the state department's licensure division to colleges, universities' preparation programs, utilization of school districts' staff development training, and to special education teachers in order to develop the competencies and

best practices for working with emotionally-disabled students within both self-contained and inclusive settings.

### Statement of the Problem

Teacher burnout is a longstanding problem in special education and particularly so for the sub-specialty of emotionally-disturbance. Teachers of students with emotional disturbances usually begin their teaching careers with high enthusiasm and a desire to help students with special needs. However, due to the lack of pre-service preparation, inconsistent staff development opportunities, stress and burnout, low compensation, role conflict, student discipline issues, and lack of administrative support, many teachers lose momentum to continue in the special education profession. These factors all contribute to teacher burnout, and increase the need for effective pre-service teacher training (Bullock, Gable, & Rutherford 1998).

According to Westat Research Association (2001), special educators have indicated that they were more likely to stay in teaching when their workload was manageable, their school was supportive of staff and students, and paperwork did not interfere significantly with their teaching. In addition, workforce conditions that encourage their capabilities and emphasize the worth of individuals contribute to greater retention (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001).

Billingsley and Cross (1992) discussed that professional commitment and job satisfaction are important factors for the study of retaining teachers in the workplace and building a strong teaching force. However, Bullock et al., (1998, p.16) stated that "...it's not how to keep teachers in our special education classrooms for students with emotional disturbances when they want to leave, but how do we provide an environment that helps special education teachers deal with the stressors of their work." In addition, exploring the correlates of commitment and job satisfaction should ultimately help us understand what might be done to enhance commitment and job satisfaction among teachers (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Also, by acting on relevant and effective solutions, the outcomes will help raise the quality of teaching personnel while maintaining a sufficient pool of qualified educators.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine why teachers who instruct emotionally disturbed students are more likely to leave their positions. Various studies in education and related areas were reviewed and analyzed in order to chronicle the various retention rates for special education

teachers. Also, the literature review yielded various reasons that special education teachers have indicated for their departure for other educational, as well as out-of-field opportunities.

### Research Questions

*The primary questions highlighted in this study include: (1) What are the factors that cause certified special education teachers who instruct emotionally-disabled students to leave the field? and (2) Do certified teachers of emotionally-disabled students experience the same barriers to retention when compared to other special educators? Answers to these questions will be discussed in future chapters and will be based on quantitative and statistical methodologies.*

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was derived from a review of literature regarding the factors affecting retention and job satisfaction of special education teachers who instruct emotionally-disturbed students. Factors highlighted from the analyzed studies were tailored into seven major themes. These themes are stated as: (1) *pre-service teacher preparation*; (2) *staff development opportunities*; (3) *stress and burnout*; (4) *compensation*; (5) *student discipline*; (6) *role conflict*; and (7) *administrative support*. Studies completed by Billingsley, Fall, and Williams (2006); Cooley-Nichols, (2004); Dickens-Smith (1995); Friedman (1991); Martin, Williams, and Hess (2001); Liu and Meyer (2005); Singh and Billingsley (1996); Gersten, Gillman, Morvant, and Billingsley (1995); Bullock, Ellis, and Wilson, (1994); and Sweeney (1991) are analyzed, embedded in this review, and support the theoretical framework.

As explained in the pictorial framework, administrative support serves a dual role as a primary predictor of teacher retention, as well as a major catalyst influencing other predictors of the reasons that teachers have indicated for staying or leaving their chosen profession. In addition, themes embedded in this chapter are explained together with supportive research surrounding each theme and their respective effects on teacher retention. Provided in Figure 1 is a detailed outline and diagram of the theoretical framework used for completion of this study.

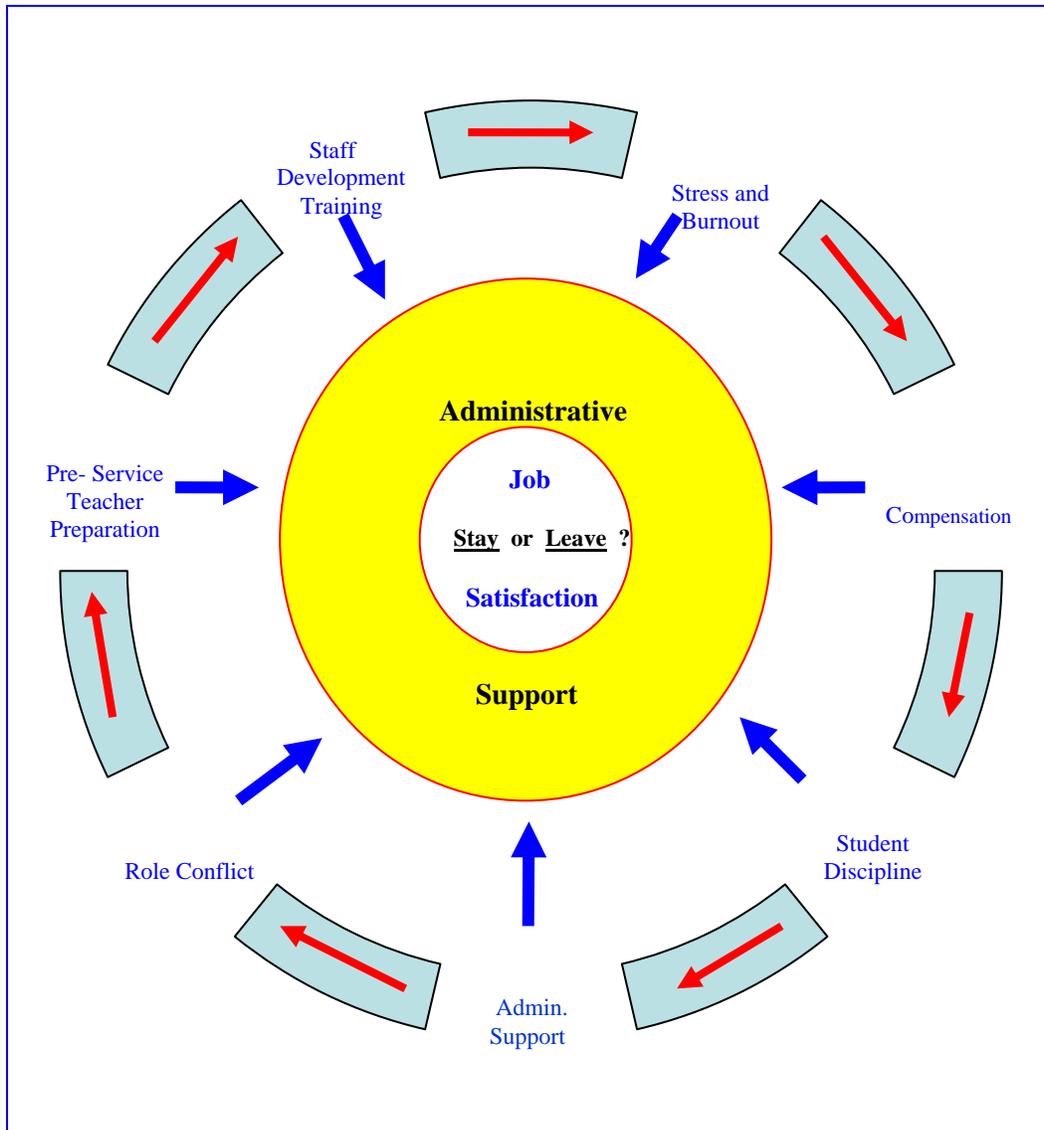


Figure 1. Factors predicting special education teacher retention (Walker, 2009).

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms are embedded in the literature review and support the foundation of this study.

*special education* - specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability that includes equal access, opportunity, participation of meetings, and transition as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997).

*emotional disturbance* - a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree adversely affect a child's educational

performance. Criteria include: (1) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (3) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (4) fears associated with personal or school problems; and (5) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. (United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education, 1994).

*retention* - involves educators who remain in the same teaching assignment and in the same school as the previous year (Billingsley, 1993).

*administrative support* - a principal assisting with problem solving, providing support to special educators with integration of special education students and discipline issues, exhibits listening skills, and relaying information to school employees of school related issues (Gersten, Gillman, Morvant, & Billingsley, 1995).

*self-contained classroom* - a setting where students receive instruction or services solely with other students with disabilities (Friend, 2007).

*teacher burnout* - the reaction to prolonged high stress commonly results either in withdrawing and caring less, or in working harder, often mechanically, to the point of exhaustion (Farber & Ascher, 1991).

*occupational stress* - the effect of task demands that teachers face in the performance of their professional roles and responsibilities (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).

*partial inclusion* - students in self-contained classrooms but participate in daily inclusion activities with their general education peers (Friend, 2007).

*staff development* - the facilitation of improvement goals and programs developed by the faculty of individual schools (Caldwell, 1990).

*full inclusion* - the practice of placing students with special needs in regular education classrooms with supports to help them fully participate. Inclusion provides support services to all children in the classroom and bases expectations on individual goals. Students with special needs are not considered *visitors*, but are an integral part of the school community (Friend, 2007).

*inclusive-based collaborative teaching* - the merging of general and special education instruction to form a unified service delivery system for meeting needs of students of varying abilities (Garntner & Lipsky, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984).

*teacher certification* – completion of a state-approved teacher preparation program, to include student teaching or an alternate state approved program (Virginia Department of Education, 2008)

### Limitations

Data collected for this study were limited to certified special education teachers who instruct emotionally-disabled students on a daily basis. Teachers who did not work with emotionally-disabled students were not included in this study. In addition, survey packets were given to special education directors for distribution to certified special education teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels within their districts. The theoretical framework presented in Figure 1 was developed to support the predictors influencing the decisions of special education teachers of the emotionally disturbed to stay or vacate their current positions. In addition, data collected from surveyed participants were self-reported for the perspective of personal opinion and individualized educational philosophy, as well as the possible influence created by peer interactions and discussion.

### Delimitations

This study focused on providing surveys to elementary, middle, and high school certified special education teachers who instruct emotionally disabled students in Southwest Virginia during fiscal year 2008-09. In order to target specifically the category of emotional disturbance, personnel from all other general and special education categories were excluded. Participants were selected who met the criteria of the study, and were sent survey packet through their directors. Results of the study are applicable only to this particular group of public school professionals and are not drawn from private school and community-based educational organizations.

### Significance of the Study

The retention of public school teachers has been an issue of continuing concern (Shen, 2001). This study provides information regarding the retention of special education teachers who teach emotionally-disturbed students and how these teachers view their teaching careers, as well as administrative supports. Findings have revealed critical predictors that affect teachers' decisions to either stay or leave teaching for other opportunities. In addition, findings from this

study have provided useful recommendations to policy makers that should enhance future recruitment and retention program strategies for all special education teachers, including those teachers who teach children with emotional disturbances.

### Chapter Summary

In summary, recruiting and retaining qualified and effective special education teachers is both difficult and challenging. A critical shortage of teachers of emotional disturbance has developed due in part to the increased number of students identified as emotionally-disturbed, coupled with a decline in the numbers of teachers formally prepared to teach emotionally-disturbed children.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997) and the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) both through their respective regulations, call for students to be instructed by qualified school personnel. As a result of these regulations, school districts have experienced increased pressure to recruit and retain the necessary personnel in their classrooms. School districts have become very creative regarding how their resources are employed to recruit and improve the retention of special education teachers, particularly the teachers of emotionally-disturbed children.

Teacher preparation programs were identified as a potential vehicle for the recruitment and retention of teachers for the emotionally-disturbed. A review of research found characteristics that affect teacher retention programs, and revealed suggestions to improve collaborative support and connections between school districts and higher education teacher preparation programs. In addition, the review of current literature strengthens the theory that predictors of pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, and administrative support affect teacher decisions to either leave or stay in the field. Also, recommendations were identified regarding the enhancement of job satisfaction for beginning and experienced special education teachers.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In recent years, the field of special education, similar to most educational fields, has entered into a vast and complicated realm of accountability and expectations. This chapter presents the historical factors surrounding the category of Emotional Disturbance and how it has evolved through federal and state legislation and litigation, educational programming, as well as personnel staffing difficulties including the perennial shortages of qualified teachers of the emotionally-disturbed. Factors such as pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, and administrative support affecting the retention of teachers of the emotionally disturbed are highlighted and discussed.

In order to accomplish the review of literature, computerized database searches were conducted through ERIC (Ovid), ERIC (First Search), and ERIC (EBSCO host). All databases were explored through use of the following key terms: special education, emotional disturbance, retention, job satisfaction, teacher preparation, administrative support, and staff development. Literature articles, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, were retrieved from the above databases and consisted of literature reviews, opinion papers, reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles.

#### Background of the Problem

According to the Twentieth Annual Report to Congress (1998), characteristics of students with emotional disturbances were as follows: (1) predominately male, of African-American descent, and account for two-thirds of all students served in special education; (2) receive most of their services in environments that separate them from general education students; (3) although some emotionally disturbed students can succeed in general education, many students and their general education teachers do not receive sufficient support services; and (4) are more likely to fail courses, earn lower grade point averages (GPA), miss more days of school, and be retained at various grade levels than other disabled students.

Statistics from the Office of Special Education Programs Data Analysis System (OSEP, DANS, 1998) revealed convincing evidence that there is a national and substantial chronic shortage of special education teachers. From 1988 to 1996, the demand for teaching positions in special education increased by 15% from 284,000 to 328,000. In addition, evidence suggested that the number of

graduates of teacher preparation programs is too low to satisfy the demand for fully certified special education teachers (OSEP, DANS 1998).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Department of Labor reported that in 2004 special education teachers held a total of 441,000 jobs, of which about ninety percent (90%) served in public school districts, approximately six percent (6%) worked at private schools, and the remainder were employed by individual and social assistance agencies, residential facilities, and in homebound or hospital environments(Bureau of Labor Statistics and U. S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006).

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (IDEIA 2004) has indicated that all students, regardless of their disability, should have access to the general education curriculum. In response, school districts have developed curricula to serve students with disabilities, including ED students through use of the following: (1) self-contained; (2) partial or full inclusive-based; and (3) inclusive-based collaborative programs. Unfortunately, regardless of programming, students with emotional disturbances continue to be instructed by teaching personnel who either have little or no experience with the population and lack minimum requirements for certification.

### *Special Education Teachers*

In addition to IDEIA federal legislation, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) calls for all school districts to employ highly qualified teaching personnel and holds the district accountable for the quality of student achievement for all students. According to Sabornie and deBettencourt (1997), the role of special educators has changed dramatically highlighted by the shift from direct provider of instruction to a role that can be defined as facilitator and/or consultant. Similarly, the new, more direct role of the general education teacher has demanded an increased understanding of disabled children, the identification of appropriate curricular and instructional configurations, and the understanding of the multitude of interactions among disabled students.

Lane, Gresham, and O'Shaughnessy's (2002) study found four key challenges that affect special education teachers who serve students with emotional disturbances. First, school districts would benefit from using cost-effective screening procedures to aid in the early detection of ED students. Also, the authors mentioned that screening intervention is effective when the discrepancy

between current and desired levels of performance is narrow and before maladaptive behaviors have been firmly ingrained in a child's behavioral repertoire.

Lane et al. (2002), noted that learning and emotional or behavioral problems are often progressive in nature, and early intervention tends to be more effective than remediation efforts, which are typically implemented after years of academic failure and social rejection. Also, that early intervention would give general and special education teachers, as well as child-study teams, vital information and support for developing instructional strategies for at-risk students.

Second, there is a need to better understand the curricula and instruction currently used to educate students with emotional disturbances. Lane et al. (2002) discussed that in order to increase the knowledge of academic interventions, future teachers should be employed in self-contained, collaborative, and resource settings. Thus, teacher preparation programs would improve by increasing the level of academic interventions taught in their educational programs. This strategy supports the current theoretical framework, which highlights pre-service teacher preparation and staff development opportunities, both which help new and experienced teachers provide a more enhanced curriculum and increase student achievement for emotionally disturbed students.

According to Lane, Gresham, and O'Shaughnessy (2002), most emotional disturbance teacher preparation programs emphasize classroom management, anger management, social skills training, and conflict resolution for their future teachers. While competence in these areas is vital to providing a sound educational experience for students with emotional disturbances, socio-behavioral matters are just one component of the broader curricular responsibilities.

Lane et al. (2002) mentioned that without exposure to the core curriculum, many students are likely to experience academic deficiencies in basic skills and content knowledge. In addition, the authors reported that omitting instruction in the core curriculum (reading, mathematics, social studies, and science) not only violates federal law, it is also socially irresponsible. According to the authors, if students do not receive a balanced curriculum that addresses both their socio-behavioral and academic needs, they are professionally disadvantaged.

The third challenge encompassed a need to systematically investigate the relationship between academic underachievement and externalizing behaviors in order to identify effective school-based intervention programs that target both prevention and remediation. According to Lane et al. (2002), it is highly unlikely that one model will prove effective for all children at all

educational levels. However, it is quite possible that different causal models may be found to be efficacious at different developmental periods. Lane et al. (2002) stated that universal and secondary intervention efforts must be of sufficient intensity to bring about lasting changes in academic and socio-behavioral areas. In contrast, older children who are exposed to multiple risk factors may require more intensive, tertiary intervention efforts in order to elicit the desired changes.

Webster-Stratton and Reid (2002) discussed that the best intervention relies extensively on parental support. However, the proximal and distal stressors that contribute to the development of antisocial behavior patterns are among some of the factors that inhibit sustained parental involvement (Reid & Patterson, 1991). Further, schools are charged with the responsibility of determining the degree that school-based interventions can effectively prevent the development of antisocial behavior (Lane, 1999; Lane et al., 2002).

Finally, many professionals for the emotionally disturbed need to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct valid and accurate functional behavioral assessments. School districts can assist their special education teachers to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills through effective staff development programs. Once a behavioral function is assessed, interventions can be designed to reduce problem behaviors and to increase the occurrence of positive behaviors (Cone, 1978).

In addition, Cone (1978) stated that periodic monitoring (of students placed on positive support plans) is vital to the success of intervention programs. Teaming practices should accompany positive behavioral support in order to help maintain communication consistency among members, reduce or eliminate negative student behaviors, and replace them with more desirable behaviors (Roanoke County Public School Behavior Intervention Manual, 2005).

### *Teacher Shortages*

This review represents an examination of literature related to special education teachers for the emotionally disturbed and the factors that affect their decisions to leave the field, as well as review their emotional outlook while they served ED students. According to IDEA (1990), the availability of qualified educators and related services personnel is a necessary component of a “free and appropriate education” (FAPE) for students with disabilities. The lack of fully-certified special education teachers, which has been described as severe, chronic, and pervasive, threatens the quality of educational services for disabled students (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004).

In addition, two studies, Buck, Polloway, and Robb, (1995) and Hare, Nathan, Darland, and Laine (2000) support previous studies and found that the initiation of alternative teacher certification programs including recruitment and transition of military personnel, recent college graduates, and individuals changing careers, and returning Peace Corps volunteers will probably continue to be used. Respectfully, school districts should develop collaborative agreements with higher education programs within their respective state (Hare et al., 2000).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1996), the shortage of qualified teachers is likely to be acute in the future, as student enrollment is expected to peak in 2007. Additionally, the NCES (1996) mentioned that more than one third of current teachers possess 20 years or more of teaching experience.

Further, it was revealed that although an experienced faculty may be viewed as a positive factor, a wave of retirements can be expected within the next decade, which will also add to the already beginning teacher shortage. In more recent research, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2006), reported that the employment or "need" of special education teachers is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2014.

Attrition rates among special education teachers also have been problematic. Studies conducted in various states indicate that special education teachers leave special education teaching positions at disproportionately higher rates than their general education peers. (Katsyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003). In addition, Billingsley (2002) stated that retention efforts should be targeted towards beginning teachers who are the most vulnerable to an early departure from teaching. Also, special educators are more prone to leave teaching because of the demanding nature of teaching special education students.

Kaufman (1993) mentioned that inexperienced special education personnel traditionally have found it difficult to utilize proactive interventions to minimize or eliminate inappropriate student behaviors. Also, teachers who have little experience with this population experience much earlier burnout rates.

Also, Billingsley and McLeskey (2004) found that while there has been a shortage of fully certified special education teachers in the United States for at least the last two decades, only recently has this shortage received significant attention at the national level.

## *Retention*

Singer (1993) found that there are shorter teaching tenures for teachers of students with emotional disorders than for teachers of students with learning disabilities or mental impairments. Researchers Plash and Piotrowski (2006) stated that by the year 2010, there will be a need for 611,550 special education teachers in the U.S. Unfortunately, about 13.2% of special education teachers vacate their positions annually, 6.0% leave the teaching profession entirely, while the remaining 7.2% migrate to general education positions (Plash & Piotrowski, 2006). Unfortunately, the special education teachers who leave their positions early are designated by their principals as the most promising (Gordon & Maxey, 2000).

According to Billingsley (1993), many retention decisions to retire, stay at home with children, or change careers often occur due to changing needs, priorities, and interests, rather than problems in the workplace. For example, providing additional administrative support, creating reasonable role expectations, and decreasing stress in the workplace does reduce attrition and increase teacher effectiveness. Boe and Bobbit (1997) discussed that although teacher turnover is a problem for administrators and policymakers in staffing the nation's classrooms, some teaching turnover is acceptable or even personally desirable (e.g., moving to a new school or to a leadership position) and some is inevitable. Also, the authors felt that a total departure from teaching is the most troublesome component because it represents a reduction in the teaching force, thus, requiring a compensating in-flow of replacement teachers.

Boe (2006) completed a 16 year study (1987-1988 through 2002-2003) of the long-term trends in the national shortage of special education teachers. The trends were based on data analyzed and published in annual reports to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education.

According to Boe (2006), a rapid growth was found in the demand for teachers of students with disabilities aged 3-5 years. From academic years 1987-88 to 1999-2000, there was an increase of 140 percent in special education teachers. During this period the number of teachers increased from 12,700 to about 30,500. However, Boe (2006) mentioned that there was an even greater increase (166 percent) in the supply of fully-certified teachers in response to the high demand.

Also, the researcher stated that during the academic years of 1999-2000, the field of special education exhibited even greater gains in meeting the increased demands for teachers of students aged 3-5 years. Illustrated in Figure 2 are the annual national increases of fully and partially certified special education teachers contrasted to annual vacancies of all teachers.

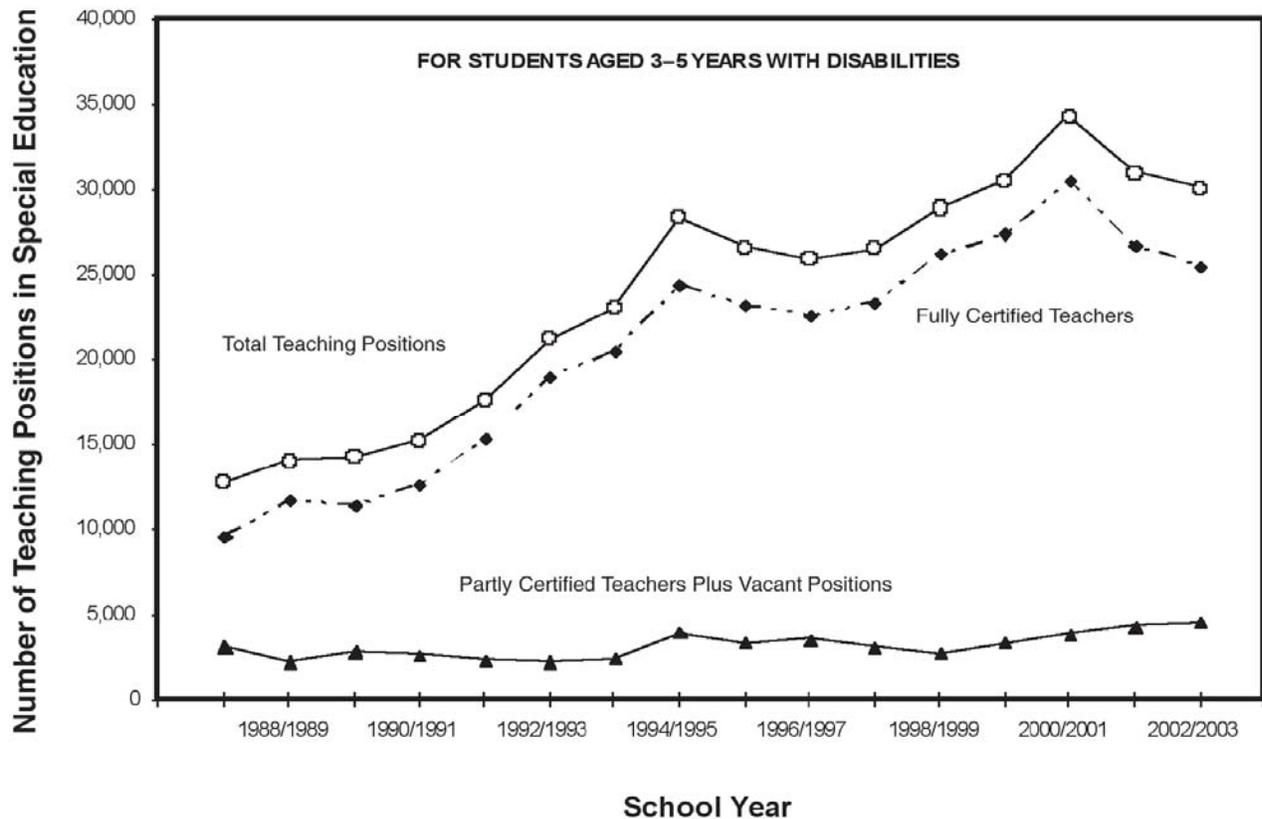
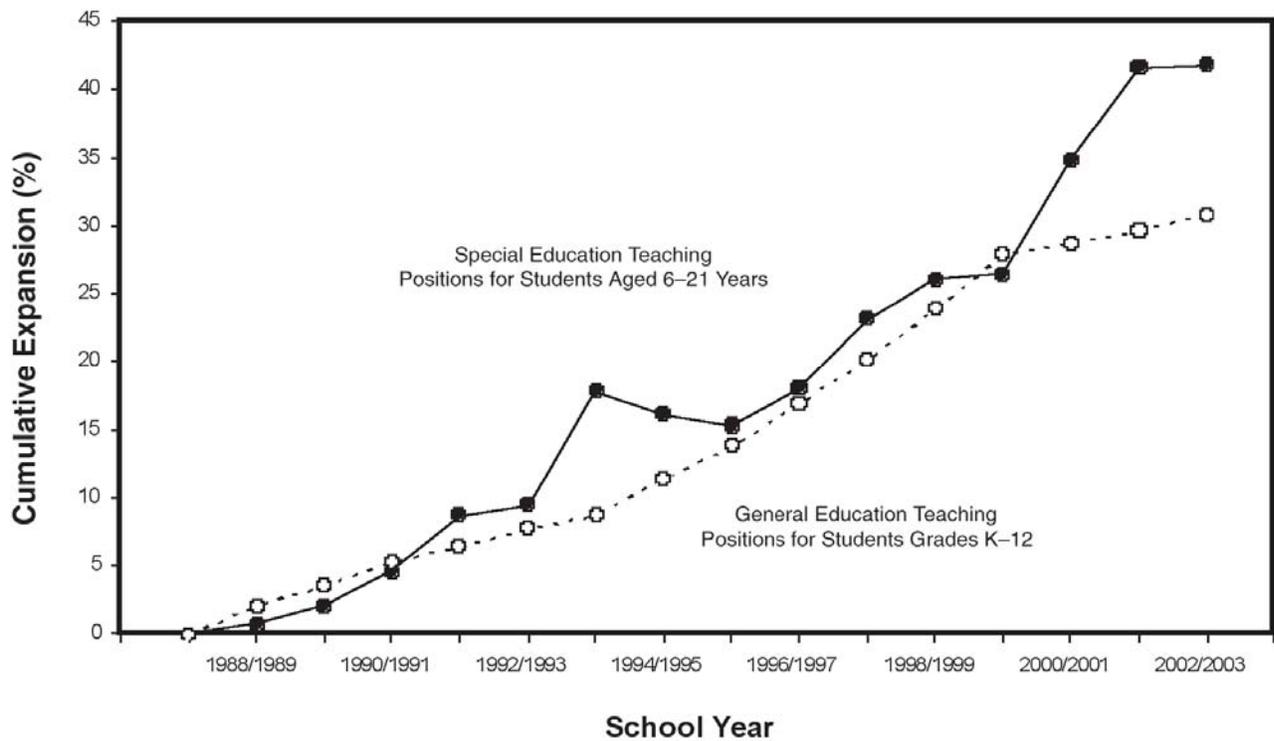


Figure 2. Number of full-time equivalent teaching positions in special education in the U.S. and outlying areas for students aged 3-5 years with disabilities, broken down by the number of fully certified teachers and the sum of not fully certified teachers plus vacant teaching positions (through 1997/1998), by school year (based on the Data Analysis System of the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education); as cited by Boe (2006).

Boe (2006) also found that the growth and demand for students aged 6-21 years was more gradual and paralleled during the first 14 years of the study (27.0% for general education; 26.5% for special education). In addition, the researcher found that positions for special education

teachers increased at a higher rate following academic years 1990-2000. Boe, (2006) explained that the reason for the increase in teaching positions was primarily to help bridge the gap from previous increases in the number of students aged 6-21years. Also, during 1993/1994 to 2002/2003, the number of disabled students aged 6-21years increased by 26 percent as the total number of special education teachers increased by only 20 percent. According to the researcher, the demand and growth for fully certified teachers for students' aged 6-21 was satisfactory. Boe (2006) mentioned that the teacher shortage for certified teachers of disabled students aged 6-21 has been severe since academic year 1987-88 and has increased annually from 7.4 percent in 1993-94 to 13.4 percent in 2002-2003. Although a positive increase, the field experienced a shortage of 54,000 special education teachers (Boe, 2006). Highlighted in Figure 3 are the comparisons of both special education and general education teachers in relation to their annual growth and demand rates.



*Figure 3.* Cumulative percentage of annual expansion of full-time equivalent teaching positions in special education (for students aged 6-21 years with disabilities) and general education (for grades K-12 in public school) by school year (based on the Data Analysis System of the Office of Special Education Programs, Department of Education, and the Common core of Data of the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education); as cited by Boe (2006).

Additionally, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006) presented a table through findings from a 2004 teacher survey involving degrees conferred in education from post secondary institutions. The table included information, such as the total number of preparation degrees in education, gender of degree recipients, type of degree earned, and specific discipline studied.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006), the total number of degrees conferred in education was 401,568. Of all degrees obtained, individual bachelor's degrees totaled 105,451, of which 22,513 were male and 82,938 were female. Masters level degrees in education awarded totaled 167,490 which included 38,863 males and 128,627 females. Doctoral candidates totaled 7,681 of which 2,557 included males and 5,124 females.

In the category of general education there were 48,019 individual degrees confirmed by higher education institutions. This total included 2,363 bachelor degrees, 25,837 masters degrees,

and 1,437 doctoral degrees. The bachelor level degrees consisted of 410 males and 1,953 females. Of those who received their master's degrees, there were 6,018 males and 19,819 females, and 462 males and 975 females obtained doctorate degrees.

Results from a NCES (2004-2005) study, indicated that the endorsement field of emotional disturbance yielded a total of 249 degrees. There were 98 earned bachelor degrees, 125 were at the master's level, and 26 confirmed doctorate degrees. Bachelor's degrees candidates consisted of 12 males and 86 females. Of the masters' level degrees, 24 were males and 101 were identified as females. Two (2) males and 24 females received their doctorate degrees.

### *Job Satisfaction*

Attracting, satisfying, and retaining special education teachers, particularly those teachers of students with emotional and behavioral difficulties, looms as a major challenge for the 21st century (Simpson, Whelan, & Zabel, 1993). Job satisfaction, motivation to remain as classroom teachers, and commitment to their subject area were topics surveyed by Burnetti (2001). He surveyed 426 high school teachers from a large Northern California school district and found that more than 60% of the respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they were satisfied with their current job assignments. Of this percentage, Burnetti personally interviewed 28 teachers who indicated that they were highly satisfied with their teaching positions and perceived that they had a positive impact on their students. The respondents indicated that the act of working with students and seeing them learn and grow were two main motivators for remaining in the field of education. In addition, Shann (1998) found that the job satisfaction of most urban middle school teachers was related directly to how well they perceived their students were succeeding.

Abelson (1986) mailed a Likert-style job satisfaction scale of his own design to teachers who categorized their students as mentally retarded, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, or as severely handicapped. He reported that the teachers of the children described as emotionally disturbed were the least satisfied with their working conditions. Abelson interpreted this result as reflecting that greater stress was placed on teachers of the emotionally disturbed.

In two-part study of job satisfaction, Garrison (2006) investigated the attrition and retention of 527 beginning credentialed teachers working in a high poverty, large minority, and linguistically diverse Southern California rural school district. The purpose of the study was to determine comparisons between conditions beginning teachers encountered early in their

teaching careers and the conditions that contributed to their job dissatisfaction and attrition. A subgroup of 21 teachers were randomly selected from the 527 teacher sample by a computer generated numbering system and were contacted for interviews. To reduce biased outcomes the interviews were conducted by a trained professional educator in a different field of study. Of the teacher subgroup sample, 11 elementary and 6 secondary teachers were from the classroom setting, 1 was promoted to administration, 1 was a university professor, and 2 had retired from teaching. Also, eleven (52%) were female and ten (48%) were male, while eleven (52%) were of Latino descent and 10 (48%) were Caucasian.

Garrison (2006) then compared her results to the outcomes of the Ingersoll and Smith (2003) study involving teacher retention and attrition. The researcher found that there were no major differences in the conditions that beginning teachers experienced when compared to other teachers in the Ingersoll and Smith (2003) study. However, when compared to the attrition results of the Luekens, Lyter, and Fox (2004) study regarding job satisfaction, Garrison found a much smaller annual teacher attrition rate of 1% compared to the Luekens et al., (2004) annual teacher attrition rate of 6.8%.

In another study, Stempien and Loeb (2002) compared the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of teachers of emotionally-disturbed students, teachers of students in general education, and teachers who were responsible for both groups of students. Of these three different professions, teachers of emotionally disturbed students were found to be the most dissatisfied. Specific stressors and frustrations, both from within and outside the classroom, were found to be associated with the dissatisfaction of the ED teachers. Additionally, the authors found that dissatisfaction was particularly common in younger, less-experienced teachers of the emotionally disturbed.

### *Research Findings*

Specific parameters for selection of studies that are included in this review were set prior to searching the literature. Searches were conducted through ERIC (Ovid), ERIC (First Search), and ERIC (EBSCO host). First, selected studies were required to address specific factors contributing to the retention of teachers in the field of emotional disturbance. Second, studies selected had to support whether teachers of emotionally disturbed students based their decision to leave the teaching profession on personal or job-related issues. Third, there were no

limitations on the year of selected studies of special education teachers prior to or after the enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 1997). This helped identify differences on the retention of special education teachers and how the teaching profession has responded to the variety of diversified classroom settings involving students with disabilities.

### *Pre-Service Teacher Preparation*

To support and increase the retention of special education teachers in the field of emotional disturbances, school districts must develop and implement long-range staff development programs. Beginning and experienced special education personnel both benefit from having the opportunity to participate in a variety of training opportunities as they provide daily instruction to emotionally disturbed students.

Additionally, teachers of emotionally disturbed students deal with changes in their political work-related environment as well as changes in the youth and families with whom they work. As a consequence, how teachers are prepared to teach this demanding group has become much more complex (Bauer, Johnson, & Sapona, 2004). One strategy employable to address the complexity of preparing teachers of emotional disturbance has been implementation of collaborative training for special education teachers and their instructional assistant(s). Collaborative training has been designed to improve communication, provide positive interaction, improve interpersonal skills, and enhance knowledge of alternative teaching styles. Embedded within collaborative training are the specific interventions that help shape and develop effective classroom structure, communication, school environment, and individual perceptions pursuant to educational goals and objectives.

Billingsley, Fall, and Williams (2006) investigated the characteristics and preparedness of special education teachers who instruct emotionally disturbed students. They compared the characteristics of these teachers to other special education teachers in relation to the following: (1) background; (2) certification status and preparedness to teach content areas under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); (3) entry paths into teaching, (4) perspectives about their pre-service preparation, and (5) self-assessment in 13 skill areas.

Billingsley et al., (2006) utilized the (SPeNSE) database to gain comparisons of the characteristics and qualifications of K–12 teachers of emotionally disturbed students to those of other special education teachers. A two-phase sample design was used to select participants for

this study and detailed surveys were developed to acquire information from selected participants. Information also was obtained from the participants through computer-based telephone interviews. The majority of teachers in the two groups were female; however, a greater number of males represented teachers of the emotionally disturbed than the other special educators. Teachers of the emotionally disturbed consisted of 244 (27.9%) males compared to 483 (14.3%) males in the other special education teacher sample. Teachers of emotionally disturbed students also were significantly younger than other special educators and had acquired significantly fewer years of special education teaching experience than other special educators. According to the researcher, teachers of emotionally-disturbed students in comparison to other special education teachers had significantly fewer years of experience as measured by the average number of years of teaching experience.

Billingsley et al., (2006) also found that beginning teachers in the field of emotional disturbance were more likely to not be fully endorsed when measured against other professionals in special education. The researchers stated that only 44.5% ( $n=30$ ) of these beginning teachers stated they met criteria for full endorsement while working their initial teaching position, as compared to 65.9% ( $n=99$ ) of other novice special education teachers. Cooley-Nichols, (2004) in the second of two studies investigated the effects of research-based practices in educating emotionally disturbed students. A practicum experience was an additional element in this general education pre-service program. Thirty-three participants in the study were undergraduate pre-service teachers (30 females and 3 males) from various backgrounds who were participating in a generic special education program. The pre-service teachers ranged in age from 20 to 50 years old, participated in a 30 hour field experience with one or more ED students, and received ongoing supervision from their respective universities. The researcher utilized direct systematic observation that required pre-service teachers to observe ED students while assessing and documenting their behavior patterns. Also, the pre-service teachers were required to complete assignments (based on best practices) prior to their interaction with their students. The pre-service teachers were then provided with additional training and guidance if they experienced difficulty meeting standards and expectations. Academic teaching strategies, social skills instruction, and behavioral intervention plans were incorporated into the goals for each pre-service teacher.

Following the initial methodology, Cooley-Nichols (2004) introduced a pre-service assessment instrument to measure techniques used in educational settings. Upon completion of the observations and interactions of pre-service teachers and the ED students, the pre-service teachers were administered a 27-question survey. The survey was developed to obtain information on the level of knowledge and understanding of strategy selection, design, and implementation utilized while working with ED students in the various settings. The two open-ended questions (1) “What have you learned about individuals with emotional and behavioral disorders, and how will you utilize this information as a classroom teacher?” and (2) “How did you link information presented in class to your practicum experience?” provided foundation of the study.

Next, the researcher used response analysis to organize 142 statement responses retrieved from the pre-service teachers. The responses were sorted into topics representing the data set and later categorized by theme. A coding system was developed which consisted of aligning each response statement to the first question according to the category in which it fell. A cut- and-paste computer procedure was used to reorganize the transcript into computer files representing the categories. This procedure revealed the following eight themes derived from statements from the first question, “What have you learned about individuals with emotional and behavioral disorders, and how will you utilize this information as a classroom teacher?” (Cooley-Nichols, 2004):

- (1) Pre-service teachers discussion of casual elements and external factors associated with emotional or behavioral disorders;
- (2) Pre-service teacher’s indication that consistency is essential to behavior change;
- (3) Pre-service teachers sharing diverse opinions about the characteristics which should make up the “ideal disposition of teachers of students with emotional or behavioral disorders;
- (4) Pre-service teachers reporting the benefit of early intervention;
- (5) Pre-service teachers describing the range of emotional disorders;
- (6) Pre-service teachers referring to the components of the identification process and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act definition of serious emotional disturbance;

- (7) Pre-service teachers explanation of the importance of intervention and described how they will utilize various strategies and techniques; and
- (8) Pre-service teachers emphasizing addressing individual student needs.

The researcher disclosed that four distinct themes were created from statements to the second question; “How did you link information presented in class to your practicum experience?” These particular themes are as followed:

- (1) Pre-service teachers statements of their ability to put theory into practice;
- (2) Pre-service teachers appreciation of the opportunity to observe effective strategy and/or intervention implementation;
- (3) Pre-service teachers observation of characteristics of disorders covered in the selected course textbook; and
- (4) Pre-service teachers noting an increase in their comfort level related to providing services for students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Overall results indicated that 85% of the responses were significant in relation to the twelve themes derived from responses to statements of pre-service teachers. It was determined that the remainder of the responses consisted of supporting statements that had no relevance to the inquiries made during the study. The researchers included the summarized thoughts and interpretations from pre-service teachers at the end of each theme. The summaries included significant variables, such as, consistency, trust, structure, patience, early intervention, proper identification, utilizing a variety of behavior interventions, brainstorming, and knowledge of emotional disturbance. The pre-service teachers felt that incorporating research-based strategies into teacher preparation programs was beneficial.

According to Martin and Weinke (1998), there have been some strides made in the education of children with emotional and behavioral disorders, yet, despite progress made, many students with emotional disturbances remain under-identified and un-served. In addition, George and George (1995) discussed that despite the movement toward inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms, professionals responsible for the education of ED students are likely to continue to experience high levels of stress due to the demanding nature of the student’s problems. In addition, barriers, such as feelings of fear, unpreparedness, anger, and being overwhelmed are factors that hinder the success of special education teachers who work with ED students.

### *Staff Development Training*

Over the years the preparation of special educators has changed dramatically since the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997). Special education teachers must deal political and federal regulation changes, as well as changes in the children and families within the community. As a consequence to those changes, how teachers are prepared has become much more complex. Teacher education programs are being asked to demonstrate how their candidates affect children's achievement. Despite the need for more research-based approaches, the quality of teacher education has improved (Bauer, Johnson, & Sapona, 2004). Many college and universities in the United States (94% or 47 states) now offer generic special education teacher pre-service programs (Cooley-Nichols, 2004). Appropriately preparing pre-service special education teachers to effectively teach students with emotional or behavioral disorders is unique (Martin & Wienke, 1998). Various researchers (Bullock et al., 1994; Gunter & Denney, 1996; Walker et al., 1998; Whelan & Simpson, 1996; Zabel, 1988) believe that observation of and actual experience with ED students is essential elements that are missing in most teacher education programs. This lack of observation and experience is due partially to the national trend from specific endorsement programs to generic special education teacher certifications and licensure systems.

Johnson and Kardos (2002) found that teachers providing specialized instruction to students with emotional disturbances understand that the job is difficult and, at times, can be emotionally and physically draining. A review of research literature in the field suggests that in order to effectively prepare special education teachers, school districts must incorporate strong content preparation, research-based practices, and heavily mentored practical experiences into their staff development and long-range plans (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Additionally, it is important for school districts to provide on-going evaluation and continued instructional support to ensure that best practices introduced during staff development training are properly implemented and used regularly (Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

Dickens-Smith (1995) completed a study about the effects of inclusion training on teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Two hundred teachers (100 special education and 100 regular education teachers) employed by the Chicago Public School System participated in an in-service training on inclusion. There were 22 males and 178 females selected for this study. Of the two hundred participants, thirty special education teachers were randomly selected for the

sample. Both groups were given a twelve-item questionnaire taken from the Inclusion/Integration (REI) Training Session Survey. Participants completed the questionnaire before and after the training. A single-group pre-test and post-test design was implemented during the study. Mean scores were used to tabulate the findings. In addition, the researchers utilized T-tests with rotating group designs to determine statistical differences between the pre- and post-tests.

A review of the results indicated both groups supported the research hypothesis and current research of inclusion. Also, participants exhibited a positive attitude towards change and implementation of inclusion after participating in the training, and both groups expressed an increased level of support for inclusion. The researchers concluded that regular education teachers expressed a positive change in eleven of the twelve questions following the inclusion training. However, a decline was noted about the successful implementation of inclusion without the participation of regular education teachers (Dickens-Smith, 1995).

To further support and strengthen the effectiveness of staff and program development training the following topics must be embedded and emphasized: (1) a coherent and shared vision; (2) blended theory, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills drawn from research and practice; (3) carefully designed field experiences; (4) standards based instruction; (5) pedagogy that is active and research based; (6) an emphasis on meeting the needs of diverse student populations; and (7) collaboration for building the professional community. The tension between theory and practice, as well as a disconnected feeling students often experience between the content area and other educational courses, continue to challenge preparation of special educators (Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum, 2002).

### *Stress and Burnout*

It has been well established that a significant number of special education teachers have perceived the educational workplace as highly stressful, and ultimately some teachers will experience failure. In addition, many teachers feel that the lack of school-based administrative and central division support add to the consistency of individual on-the-job stress (Byrne, 1991). Wisniewski & Gargiulo (1997) mentioned that occupational stress is the effect of task demands that teachers face in the performance of their professional roles and responsibilities. Acheson & Gall (1992) and Farber and Ascher (1991) suggested that burnout or career failure is due to complex and varied reasons, but that teacher training, or lack thereof, is thought to be a primary contributor to their success or failure.

Smith and Milstein (1984) conducted a historical review of the stress in teaching from the 1930s to the 1980s and identified the following concerns: (1) rewards by years in the profession rather than by achievement; (2) little opportunity for collegial feedback; (3) role conflicts; (4) little control by teachers over decisions that affect their work; (5) lack of career ladders; (6) pre-service training that appears to be inadequate or irrelevant; (7) perception that many administrators are poorly prepared or at least do not seem to care; and (8) the failure of school districts to protect teachers in basic survival areas.

Following the Smith and Milstein (1984) study, Marlow, Inman, and Betancourt-Smith (1996) examined the reasons for teachers leaving the field. The researchers analyzed results of 212 randomly selected K-12 teachers from Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming who completed an attitude survey on job satisfaction and perceptions of the workplace. Smith et al., found that 44 % of teachers surveyed considered leaving the teaching profession for the following reasons:

- (1) lack of fulfillment;
- (2) boredom with the daily routine;
- (3) stress;
- (4) frustration;
- (5) difficult working conditions;
- (6) low salaries;
- (7) student discipline;
- (8) student's lack of motivation;
- (9) poor attitudes; and
- (10) lack of respect from community, parents, administration, and/or students.

Ingersoll (1999) analyzed the effects of school and organizational characteristics of teacher turnover and school staffing problems and found that inadequate administrative support, low salaries, students discipline problems, and limited faculty input into school decision-making all contributed to higher rates of teacher turnover. Also, he suggested that school staffing issues are not the main result of shortfalls driven by increasing retirement levels, but result from low retention due to organizational conditions.

Friedman (1991) conducted a study of school culture factors leading to the burnout of special education teachers. The researcher profiled the comparisons of schools with high and low

burnout characteristics as reported by special education personnel within those schools. A random sample of 1,597 teachers (1,485 females and 112 males) in 78 elementary schools was used to complete the study. All participants were given the Maslach Burnout Inventory, followed by interviews from principals, teachers, and school incumbents. Demographics revealed 63% Israeli, 20% European or American, and 17% Afro-Asian. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the sample was married and 12% were single, divorced, or widowed. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the participants had children, with the majority having children of elementary school age. In addition, 70% of the sample participated in college pre-service training, 28% received bachelor's degrees and 2% obtained high school diplomas. The participants recorded an average of 11.5 years in teaching experience.

A two-stage procedure was conducted during the study. During the first stage teachers completed the MBI and a personal data sheet. Next, a summary form was compiled for each teacher and individual school based on total scores by employed teaching personnel. According to Friedman (1991), the total score was a representation of the burnout expressed by all employed teachers. The schools were then separated into two groups based on their standardized scores. The two groups were labeled as high burnout and low burnout schools. High burnout schools were determined to have a burnout score of one or more standard deviation above the average ( $z > 1.0$ ) and low burnout schools were categorized by being one standard deviation below the average ( $z < -1.0$ ). Eight schools were determined as high burnout with the total of 115 teachers and a burnout score of 3.5. In addition, ten schools with a total of 171 teachers were considered low burnout schools and revealed a burnout score of 1.4.

Several weeks later, the second stage of this study was implemented with the primary intent to extract and compare differences in the climate and culture between the two types of schools. It was discussed that 12 schools were selected (6 from each group) from the total of 18 schools. The schools were selected based on the criteria of administrative stability and social and geographical position. Random sampling was used to select school personnel for interviews. Blind interviews were conducted with administrators, teachers, counselors, and grade-level coordinators by experienced researchers to rule out bias of the findings. According to Friedman (1991), environmental variables were determined through interviews of school personnel, observations of the school yard, and minutes from scheduled staff meetings.

Results indicated that there was a difference in high and low-burnout schools as measured by pedagogical environment. There was no difference in high burnout schools between teaching techniques and restructuring processes. It was reported by Friedman (1991) that almost all high-burnout schools had set measurable goals that stressed academic achievement. Educational goals were well defined and achievement goals (values, loyalty, and moral behavior) were ranked lower in importance in the hierarchy of pedagogical objectives within the schools.

Low-burnout schools tended to exhibit more flexibility with educational objectives. Measurable achievements (reading and math scores) had a higher ranking of importance in hierarchy of educational objectives. Also, school personnel did not demand an increase in standards and had no desire to achieve high standards. In addition, school personnel had high noise thresholds and expressed little reaction over loud classrooms.

Friedman (1991) reported that in high-burnout schools, the hierarchy of administrative structure and procedures were well-defined. Authority was delegated among administrative personnel to cover all areas of responsibility and subject areas of the school. It was perceived that administrative personnel developed a clear and supportive relationship with all teachers within the building. Staff meetings were few and a focus on developing small teams and discussion groups supported consistency with maintaining school issues and improved staff morale. In low-burnout schools, different patterns of administrative structure were the norm. Although job descriptions were clear, they changed frequently over the course of the year. In addition, three of the six schools exhibited no clear administrative structure. However, there were permanent administrative teams that rotated on an annual basis (Friedman, 1991).

According to Friedman, there was no significant difference between high-and low-burnout schools relative to in-service training courses. However, there was a significant difference in where the training took place. In low-burnout schools, 83% of courses were offered outside the school and 17% on school grounds. In addition, high-burnout schools offered 67% of the courses in special settings and 33% took place on school premises,  $\chi^2 = 5.49$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .020$ . According to the researcher, the buildings in high-burnout schools were evaluated as clean and orderly. Hallways were clear of distraction during instruction time and classrooms were structured and organized. Administrative offices were located in designated areas of the building and activities were conducted behind closed doors.

Friedman (1991) discussed that low-burnout schools were not as evaluated as high-burnout schools. Litter was found on the floor in various places of the buildings. Students were observed littering in the halls and there was little attention paid to dust or dirt. Many school facilities were labeled multi-functional, and teachers moved equipment frequently among classes.

It was also reported that teachers were older in high-burnout schools. The median age in high-burnout schools was 35.45 years, compared to 33.06 years in low-burnout schools. One-third of teaching personnel in low-burnout schools were 26 to 30 years old. However, in high-burnout schools, only 18% of the sample was determined to be in the 26-30 age range. In addition, the low-burnout schools had one-half as many teachers aged 41-45.

Friedman (1991) mentioned that high-burnout schools had fewer female teachers (81% percent) than low-burnout school (96% percent). In addition, it was reported that the educational level in high-burnout schools was lower compared to low-burnout schools. In high-burnout schools, 62% of school personnel obtained college-level teacher training. However, low-burnout schools, 81% of the faculty possessed college-level training.

Also, it was reported that 36% of teachers of high-burnout schools received university degrees in teaching, compared to low-burnout school who reported only 17%. The author discussed that high-burnout schools had teachers with more teaching experiences than those in low-burnout schools. High-burnout schools exhibited a mean of 14.43 years while the low-burnout schools reported a mean of 10.67 years,  $t = -3.66$ ,  $df = 265$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### *Compensation*

Sweeney (1991) investigated the reasons that teachers change their employment assignment. The researcher focused on the movement of teachers between rather than within districts. A database was used to trace the careers of full-time teachers in Michigan during the 1970s. A discrete-time likelihood method was used to obtain relevant information of the participants. The study was restricted to districts with stable to expanding enrollments to insure that teachers' job changes were voluntary and not driven by layoffs. According to Sweeney (1991), a separate analysis was made of special education teachers in high demand areas because of new state legislation mandating expansion of special education programs. Results indicated that the probability of a job change will show an increase during the first two years of teaching, then steadily decrease to almost no job movement after the fifth year of teaching. Also, findings

indicated that teachers prefer larger school districts to smaller ones and are more likely to leave districts with large numbers of students from families with low socioeconomic status. Also, they are more likely to leave school districts with relatively low salary scales.

Martin, Williams, and Hess (2001) completed a study on implementing IDEA in rural settings and the preparation of service delivery of students with disabilities. A survey questionnaire was developed that incorporated items, such as teacher personnel preparation, recruitment, retention, and service delivery problems. The first part of the survey targeted information about the participants' position and school setting. In addition, questions in section two of the survey involved recruitment, retention, service delivery, and implementation. The survey was mailed to 166 individuals who attended a national conference. Concurrently, faxed copies were sent to ensure that each respondent received the survey. Follow-up phone calls were made to all non-respondents. A second mailing was sent to all non-respondents, as well as follow-up telephone calls.

Results indicated a 57% (95 respondents out of 166 participants) return rate. The researchers eliminated 7% of the returned questionnaires as respondents stated they were not knowledgeable of the subject matter, nor were they employed in rural areas. However, 83% of questionnaires were analyzed, representing a 50% response rate. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents were college/university professors, special education administrators counted for 18% of the response rate, SEA and LEA personnel constituted 6%, and 5% were special education teaching personnel. Two percent (2%) were from general education/supervisor positions, 1% from related service personnel and 6% listed as other. The other consisted of hourly employees, staff development personnel, and consultants.

Over 78% of the respondents worked in rural areas, 4.8% stated they worked in remote areas, 8% indicated they were employed in remote and rural settings, and 8% did not respond to the survey question. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the respondents stated their preparation program consisted of only special education curricula. Thirty-six percent (36%) mentioned their program was focused on both general and special education and 30% revealed an emphasis on only general education. Also, respondents stated that distance to campus, retention of certified staff, recruiting of staff, proximity to cultural and sporting events, and salary as major factors of difficulty of being located in a rural setting.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents indicated that there were shortages in special education teachers. Also, the sample indicated that professional development opportunities, paid educational tuition, and competitive salaries as the top three recruitment strategies for recruitment of qualified personnel. Similarly, on-site professional development, paid educational opportunities, and salary incentives were reported as the top three retention strategies. However, respondents mentioned that although competitive salaries were selected as the third most important recruitment strategy, it was determined to be the single most important factor for retention and recruitment of personnel. In addition, results of this study mentioned that state and local agencies must develop strong recruitment and retention packages that include compensation for salary incentives, allocation for travel time for conferences and professional development activities, provision of time for consultation with colleagues, signing bonuses, housing allowances, and lucrative benefit packages.

Institutions of higher education in rural areas were advised to restructure their teacher education programs to include both general and special educators. Both institutions of higher education and state and local education agencies were advised to continue their staff development activities for faculty members, as it is vital to the success of recruitment and retention of education professionals.

Sultana (2002) identified the factors contributing to the high attrition rate of teachers, the positives of the teaching profession, and recommendations to attract more candidates to pre-service teacher education programs. Sultana (2002) utilized an instrument of open-ended questions and sent them to 290 (210 regular and 80 special education) elementary, middle, and high school teachers with three or more years of teaching experience in southeastern and central Kentucky. Data were arranged into frequencies and responses were categorized into factors according to nature and similarity. The highest frequency response was turned into recommendations regarding salary increases, removal of disruptive students, and reduced paperwork.

### *Student Discipline*

As previously stated, special education teachers of the emotionally-disturbed recorded the highest rate of turnover and lowest rate of retention. (Koyanagi & Gaines, 1993). Also, ED students were identified later than any other group of students with disabilities. ED students are significantly under-identified and undeserved, and once identified, they are placed in more

restrictive educational settings than any other group of students with disabilities (U. S. Department of Education, 2000).

Students with emotional disturbances have a stigma of being disruptive, combative, and difficult to instruct. Over seventy-five percent (75%) of secondary school students who have been identified as emotionally-disturbed have failed one or more courses and have recorded the highest rate of failure of any category of students with disabilities (Wagner, 1995). According to Wagner (1995), only forty-two percent (42%) have earned a high school diploma compared with fifty-six percent (56%) of all students with disabilities, and seventy-nine percent (79%) of youth in the general population. These students have exhibited a dropout rate of fifty-five percent (55%), compared with thirty-six percent (36%) for students with other disabilities and twenty-one percent (21%) for the general student population.

Liu and Meyer (2005) conducted a study that examined the perceptions of teachers regarding the issue of teacher turnover. Data were retrieved and analyzed from the SASS and NCES's Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS). Participants included 6,279 teachers from public and private schools who responded to the 1994–95 edition of the TFS. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the respondents were female, and participants' were placed into four specified age categories: (1) less than 30, 30–39, 40–49, and greater than 50. Race categories consisted of the following; Caucasian (87%), African-American (5%), Hispanic (5%), Asian (2%), and American Indian (1%). The majority of teachers surveyed (41%) remained in their teaching positions since the first survey. However, nearly thirty-eight percent (38%) reported that they had left the profession (21%) responded that they had transferred to a different teaching position.

A twenty-five question 4-point Likert-style survey was developed containing five important aspects of teaching; (1) student discipline problems (SD); (2) school climate (SC); (3) professional support (PS); (4) compensation (CP), and (5) work conditions (SD). The survey questionnaire probed teacher information about the satisfaction of their teaching positions. High scores indicated low-level satisfaction perceptions. To analyze the complex data, the following statistics were employed: (1) multiple regression; (2) multivariate analysis of variance; and (3) hierarchical linear modeling.

Results noted the average scores of teacher perceptions of job satisfaction included  $y_{40} = 2.50$  ( $SD = 0.59$ ) for compensation,  $y_{10} 2.20$  ( $SD = 0.64$ ) for student discipline problems,  $y_{50} 2.05$  ( $SD = 0.50$ ) for work conditions,  $y_{20} 1.97$  ( $SD = 0.54$ ) for school climate, and  $y_{30} 1.93$

(SD = 0.52) for professional support. Participants in this study reported that they were least satisfied with their salary and benefits. Discipline problems were reported as the second most important consideration and teachers indicated that they were just as discouraged about the problems of student discipline as they were about low salaries. There was also a significant correlation between student discipline issues and professional support ( $r = .60$ )  $p < .01$ . The high correlation revealed that a supportive climate may decrease a teachers' negative outlook regarding student discipline problems.

Teachers' perceptions concerning student discipline problems suggest that they may lack the knowledge and resources necessary to successfully manage student discipline problems. Teachers perceived that they are prepared to instruct those students who are ready to learn by traditional textbook standards, however, the current curriculum did not adequately prepare them to manage and instruct students in the current classrooms.

### *Role Conflict*

Roles are defined in terms of role expectations that are predetermined by the institution (Herbert & Miller 1985). If there is consensus regarding the behavioral expectations of a specific role, then the role incumbent enjoys a well-defined role identity. However, if there is disagreement among the groups within the institution defining the expectations of the same role, the role incumbent may experience role conflict. According to more recent findings, Edmonson and Thompson (2001) indicated that role conflict occurs when an individual's multiple roles within a position are in conflict with one another or may be in conflict with their own role expectations. In addition, when teachers are not sure of what is expected of them, when they lack the information or support to understand what their role should be, and then burnout is more likely.

Beginning teachers often enter the field of special education with the expectation that they will teach small groups of children through use of specialized instructional strategies. However, the field of special education has evolved rapidly over the years (CEC, 2000). For example, serving such diverse populations in single classroom settings has created increased stress and anxiety levels for both general and special education teachers (IDEA, 1997).

As described by Crane and Iwanicki (1986), teachers who experience conflicts between their own and others' expectations often become stressed and less satisfied with their teaching positions. Also, novice special educators have complained that they do not have sufficient

opportunities to collaborate with their general education peers to provide more inclusive settings for their students (Billingsley & Tomchin, 1992; Boyer & Lee, 2001; Busch et al., 2001; Carter & Scruggs, 2001). Concurrently, veteran special educators have described themselves as “outside the mainstream” are provided few opportunities for interaction with other school professionals” (CEC, 2000). According to Mastropieri (2001) and Otis-Wilborn, Winn, and Ford (2000), a lack of collegiality has increased the feelings of isolation and stress levels of novice teachers.

Embich (2001) conducted a survey on 300 middle and high school special education teachers to identify roles and factors leading to teacher burnout. Results indicated that teachers experienced increased levels of emotional exhaustion during their teaching assignment. In addition, special education teachers who practiced collaborative teaching with general education personnel were among those who experienced a greater degree of emotional stress. According to the authors role conflict, role ambiguity, perceived workload, and lack of administrative support were factors that influenced teachers’ feelings of emotional exhaustion.

Singh and Billingsley (1996) completed a study to identify factors that have influenced special education teachers intentions to stay in the profession and found that they were the same for teachers of emotionally disturbed students as they were for other special education teachers. Participants in the study included 658 special education teachers and 159 teachers who instructed students who were emotionally-disturbed. Results indicated workplace conditions were the main barrier to remain in the field of special education and teach emotionally-disturbed students. Job satisfaction also had a strong impact on whether the teachers intended to remain in the teaching field. In addition, role-related problems, such as perceived lack of administrative and collegial support had a negative impact. Recommendations for future research included an increased focus on other factors related to job satisfaction, such as self-efficacy, student and peer relationships, the emphasis of inclusive settings, and how teacher roles affect the retention and attrition of special education teachers.

### *Administrative Support*

Principal support is critical to all aspects of job satisfaction (Gersten, 1995). It is the focus of school districts to support and guide beginning and experienced special education teachers as they implement instructional programming for emotionally disturbed students. Administrative personnel are viewed as the top instructional leaders of their schools and help guide the academic path for all students and instructional personnel (Gersten, 1995).

Overall, across all academic educators, job satisfaction is associated with greater leadership support, work involvement, lower levels of role conflict and stress (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). In addition, increased administrative support is a vital aspect of developing a supportive and satisfied teaching staff. Also, experienced levels of administrative support will increase teacher commitment towards employment in their school district and experience more satisfaction with their jobs (Billingsley & Cross, 1992).

According to Brownell, Smith, McNellis and Miller (1997), improvements of the work environments and enhanced teacher preparation training leads to the success of reducing attrition among special education teachers. Also, administrators must look for ways to tailor or prioritize the job assignment of special education teachers. This should help decrease teacher burnout among special educators and increase their retention rates.

Idol (2006) indicated that over the last decade the leadership styles of principals have changed from serving as managers to a combination position that includes both manager and instructional leader. In addition, the assumption of instructional leadership by principals will help teachers develop more advanced skills in teaching a multilayered curriculum, as well as better attending to individual learning needs of students. This should occur without diminishing curriculum and student performance standards.

Gersten (1995) completed a study on attrition and retention of special education teachers. Path analysis was utilized on data collected from special education teachers employed by three Western urban school districts. The sample size ranged from 169 to 243 special education teachers limited by the ages of teachers from 55 years and younger.

According to the researcher, the path analysis highlighted four factors affecting teachers' intent to leave the field. These four factors were administrative support, role opportunities for professional growth, role conflict and weakened autonomy, and relationship of experience and commitment to the field of special education. The teachers' perceptions of administrative support included the following:

- (1) an administrator participating with problem solving;
- (2) receiving support by the administrator in both integration and student discipline problems;
- (3) acknowledgement of being heard by the principal; and
- (4) being knowledgeable about what happens in the school environment.

The teachers also expressed four additional perceptions of higher level administrative support.

- (1) a deeper level of support to the field of special education;
- (2) additional learning opportunities through staff development training and on-the-job experiences;
- (3) stronger feelings of trust and individual decision-making abilities; and
- (4) an understanding of collaboration between position objectives that are in line with the teacher's individual beliefs.

Through its impact on the four previous areas, principal support should lower the likelihood that a special educator will plan on leaving (Gersten 1995).

Second, opportunities for professional growth may be guided by central administration and school building administration. Special education teachers perceived this area a barrier to job satisfaction that decreases the opportunity for on-the-job experiences and individual growth. In addition, special education teachers perceived that when they are given the chance for growth opportunities, they perceive less conflict, reduced difficulty and confusion with their responsibilities as a teacher, and experience more autonomy. From a negative perspective, that lack of growth opportunities constitutes a major source of dissatisfaction.

Third, role conflict and weakened autonomy correlated with stress and satisfaction of the special education teachers' current assignments. Chronic stress decreased commitment to the profession and reduced satisfaction of current teaching assignments. Also, there was a direct but limited relationship between role conflict/weak autonomy and commitment to the profession of special education. A stronger effect on role difficulties and commitment was found when stress was utilized as a variable, and it was determined that similar affects were visible when the inverse of stress measured against role conflicts/autonomy and commitment.

According to Gersten (1995), the fourth factor of relationship of experience in the area of specialized instruction was strongly enhanced by commitment to the profession and teaching experience. Role conflict and satisfaction with current teaching assignments were considered to be less effective. Regretfully, less-experienced teachers were more likely to leave teaching. Teachers who had a lower commitment and decreased satisfaction with their jobs were more likely to leave the field than those who expressed increased role conflicts (Gersten, 1995). Figure 4 provides a pictorial framework of Gersten's four factors affecting the attrition and retention of special education teachers.

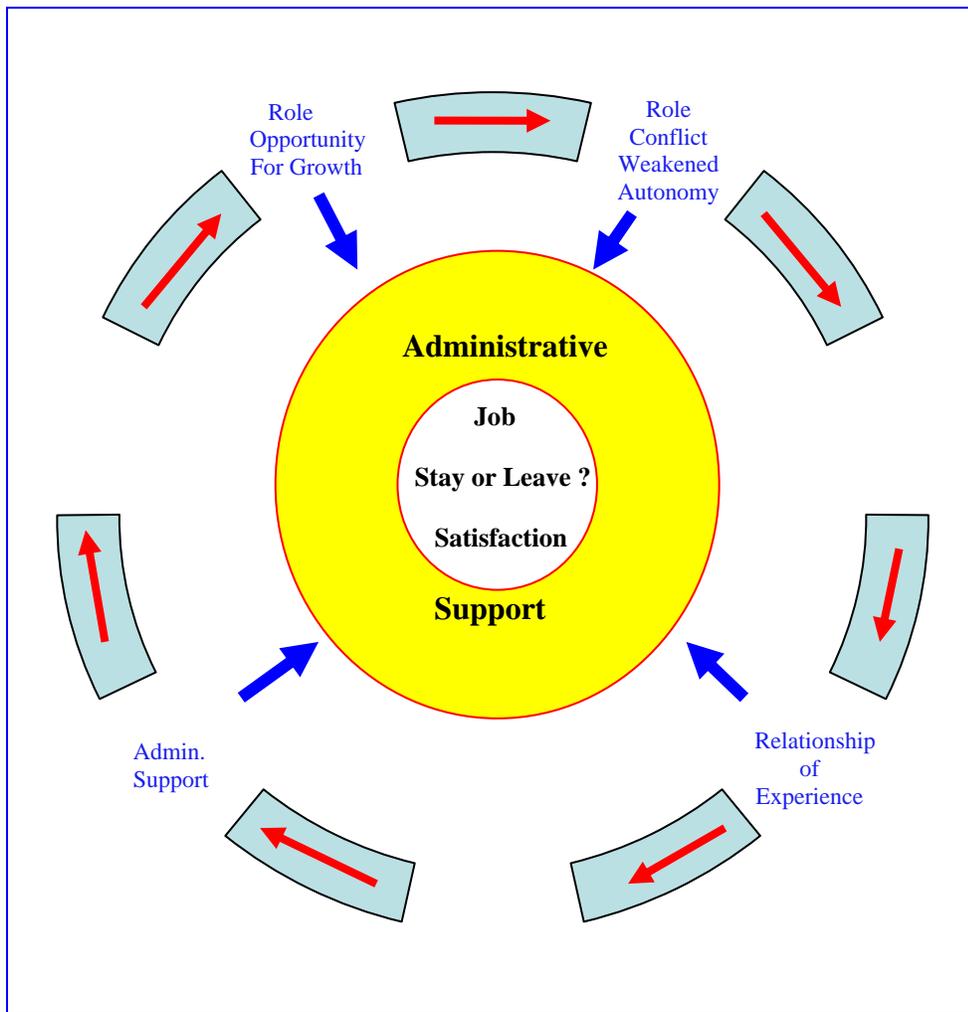


Figure 4. Factors predicting special education teacher retention (Walker, 2009).

Gersten, Gillman, Morvant, and Billingsley, (1995) reported that special education teachers recorded different views of building level administrative support and central office support. The authors revealed that special educators perceived their building level administrator as needing a greater understanding towards the satisfaction and commitment of specialized instruction. These problematic areas included:

- (1) lack of understanding of what teachers do in their classrooms;
  - (2) failure to recognize the significance of teachers' work challenges and accomplishments;
  - (3) limited assistance with specific problems, such as discipline or integration efforts;
- and

- (4) reluctance to involve teachers in determining the shape of the school's special education programs.

### Summary

The field of special education will continue to evolve and bring forth many challenges to the educators working with emotionally-disturbed students. Although the field is ever-changing, experienced and well-trained teachers are needed to work in the classroom; however, very few educators record long tenures in such difficult settings. With the trend of today's classroom becoming even more diverse, it is certain that without the support of stronger preparatory programs and effective staff development training, teacher shortages in special education, particularly teachers of the emotionally-disturbed will likely increase. Although considered a rewarding profession, the difficulties, frustration, and burnout experienced by special education teachers working with ED students can be caused by several factors. These factors include pre-service teacher preparation programs, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, and administrative support.

Special education teachers enter the teaching profession with the distinct goal of making a difference in the lives of students with special needs, as well as fulfilling their own goals and self-worth. But due to the powerful effects of stress and emotional strain from both internal and external factors, they often are forced to abandon their chosen profession.

The literature search conducted yielded substantial information regarding why special education teachers leave the field. The ten analyzed studies extracted support the fact that internal and external factors lead to the low retention and high turnover rate of special education teachers. Most factors were cross-categorically identified as having some affect or retention in all areas of special education. However, there were very few studies that focused on the critical area of special education teachers who instruct students with emotional disturbances and the specific reasons why they leave the profession.

We are in the age of accountability as school districts have to comply with both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and No Child Left Behind. Additionally, they are also compelled to comply with the often more rigorous requirements of the individualized state mandates. As the crisis of retention among teachers instructing emotionally disturbed students continues, school districts will find it increasingly difficult to provide the necessary quality in a continuum of services, leaving the field of special education with lost momentum in providing

the necessary experience, structure, and support for teachers who instruct emotionally disabled students.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter gives an understanding of the processes utilized to complete this study. A detailed description of the setting, individuals targeted as participants, and the explanation and description of the instrument developed for the targeted population. In addition, field testing for validity and reliability of the instrument is discussed, as well as the procedures of how data will be collected and analyzed from respondents.

#### Setting

This study took place in various elementary, middle, and high school settings in regions six and seven in Southwestern Virginia. This two region study included public school settings that employ certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students. This study excluded all private schools located in each identified school district.

Contact personnel from each school district sent survey packets to certified special education teachers in their schools. Special education teachers were allowed to complete the survey at their convenience. Also, it was determined that teachers could complete the survey at their homes if time does not permit during school hours.

#### Sample

The sample for this study consisted of certified elementary, middle, and high school special education teachers in Southwestern, Virginia who instruct emotionally disabled students in school-based programs on a daily basis. Participants also maintained individual caseloads of students identified with an emotional disability.

In addition, all special education teachers had knowledge and/or experience with self-contained classrooms (setting where students receive instruction or services solely with other students with disabilities (Friend, 2007), partial inclusion (students in self-contained classrooms but participate in daily inclusion activities with their general education peers (Friend, 2007), fully inclusive-based programs (students with special needs placed in regular education classrooms and bases expectation on individual goals (Friend, 2007), or inclusive-based collaborative programs (merging of general and special education instruction to form a unified service delivery system to meet the needs of students with varying disabilities (Garntner &

Lipsky, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). Permission was sought from selected school divisions, as well as signed letters from special education teachers participating with the study.

### Informal Interviews

To support the findings of the literature review, this researcher randomly selected four special education teachers who instructed emotionally disabled students to participate in an informal interview. The purpose of the interview was to determine if additional data was needed relating to factors affecting the retention of certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students. This researcher orally presented five open-ended questions to each participant and recorded their verbal responses. Following the interviews the responses were categorized and ranked according to their frequency mentioned by each participant. The data was analyzed to determine which factor(s) ranked highest among all responses. The significant factor(s) were added to the theoretical framework developed from the chapter two literature review.

### Instrument

A special education teacher survey was used to gather data for this study. This researcher utilized a previously created survey developed by Parks and Geocometti (2005). Selected sections of the survey were manipulated to align with this particular study. In addition, the foundation of the survey encompassed a focus of the research questions and purpose of this study. Also, questions targeting predictors (*pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support*) that supports the theoretical framework of this study were included. The Likert-scale instrument was used to provide individual scores for predictors affecting a special education teachers' decision to leave their current teaching position.

Results of the instrument yielded participants' age, race, gender, years of teaching experience, years of experience teaching in emotional disturbance, grade level, education level, and years teaching in an inclusive or collaborative setting. The instrument also incorporate a 4-point scale that was constructed to include choices, such as: 4 = SA (Strongly Agree), 3 = A (Agree), 2 = D (Disagree), and 1 = SD (Strongly Disagree).

The instrument was sent by mail to special education directors in regions six and seven of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The survey packet was then forwarded to special education teachers

who work with emotionally disabled students on a daily basis. The researcher coded all survey responses received from participating school districts and developed an electronic listing indicating the total number of surveys given to special education teachers. In addition, follow-up survey packets were sent to non-respondents.

### Validity of Instrument

An assessment of the validity of the instrument was exercised by a group of experienced professionals in the field of education. According to Howell (2007), external validity is the true random sampling (selection) and accurate estimation of the characteristics of a population. The sample for this study was determined by this procedure. In addition, this researcher determined the internal validity of this study through similar means. Howell (2007) describes internal validity as the integrity of an experiment by which the outcomes mean match prior understanding and expectations.

Prior to the validation, this researcher provided the group with an overview of the study, review of the instrument, and the purpose of the outcomes. The group assisted with analyzing the questions for arrangement, comprehension, and consistency, as well as justifying the predictor areas as relevant information when compared to the research questions, purpose, and other supportive information within the instrument.

Outcomes from the instrument were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for appropriate frequencies and percentages of responses collected from the group. In addition, the validation process determined the final format for the instrument, which was sent to participants for completion of this study.

### Data Collection

Written permission was sent electronically and mailed to the Superintendent of each school division for participation with the survey instrument. In addition, a copy was sent to the school division's Director of Special Education for consistency and hierarchy purposes. Upon approval, survey packets were mailed and electronically sent to the Director of Special Education for distribution to special education teachers meeting criteria for this study. Also, the packets included directions stating how and where to send completed surveys. In addition, relevant demographic information included; (a) whether they left or stayed in the field, (b) age, (c) race, (d) gender, (e) years of (f) teaching experience, (g) years of experience teaching in emotional

disturbance, (h) grade level, (i) education level, (j) geographical area, and (k) teaching in an inclusive or collaborative setting. Data from completed surveys revealed reasons why special education teachers who instruct emotionally-disabled students leave their positions for other educational or out-of-field opportunities. Results also included the number of experienced teachers, teaching methodologies, barriers to retention between general and special education teachers, and the overall affect of administrative support towards the special education teachers were determined. In addition, returned surveys were strategically coded and maintained in an electronic database. Follow-up surveys were sent to non-respondents utilizing the same procedures as the first mailing. Also, collected data was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to be analyzed.

### Data Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to analyze and interpret participants' responses to survey items of the special education teacher survey. According to Creighton, Coleman, & Adams (1997), confirmatory factor analysis extracts the specific constructs of a given data set, reduces variables to make the data set more manageable and retains information during the process. Also, confirmatory factor analysis seeks to determine the relationship between the hypothesized measures and targeted latent variables, as well as determine the expectations about which variables will load on which construct (Kim and Mueller, 1978b: 55).

In addition, Principal Component Analysis was conducted to help identify the constructs from participants' responses to survey items of the special education teachers' survey. This process allowed further analysis of survey items and solidified various correlations within the data set.

Although correlations can indicate that there is a relationship between variables, it cannot reveal the cause or impact the variables have on one another within the relationship (Sprinthall, Schmutte, & Sirois, 1991). Data collected from respondents were analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Selected data was disaggregated by supporting variables, such as gender, age, years of experience in special education, and years of experience instructing students with emotional disturbances.

## Chapter Summary

Retaining qualified teachers in any capacity of education holds its own level of difficulty. Maintaining and attempting to increase the retention of certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students carries with it a weight that can be emotionally and physically daunting for any school division. This study provided information that could assist with developing strategies to improve the retention of special education teachers.

To strengthen the literature review, informal interviews were conducted with four random special education teachers at the elementary, middle and secondary school levels, who case managed and worked with emotionally disabled students on a daily basis. The purpose of the interview was to identify additional factors that influence retention of certified special education teachers.

Results of the analysis identified *workload* as a factor respondents felt influenced the retention of certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students. Figure 5 provides a pictorial view of the enhanced framework of predictors supporting this study. A 4-point Likert scale survey was sent to certified special education teachers with directions of survey completion and return procedures. The survey yielded vital demographic information, such as (a) age, (b) race, (c) gender, (d) years of teaching experience, (e) years of experience teaching in emotional disturbance, (f) grade level, (g) education level, and (h) teaching in an inclusive or collaborative setting.

Data collected from the teacher survey was analyzed with the assistance of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Results revealed Confirmatory Factor Analysis outcomes of certified special education teachers working with emotionally-disabled students in the public school settings in Southwestern Virginia. The analysis provided insight to the theory that certain predictors (*pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support*) affect job satisfaction and cause the low retention of certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students.

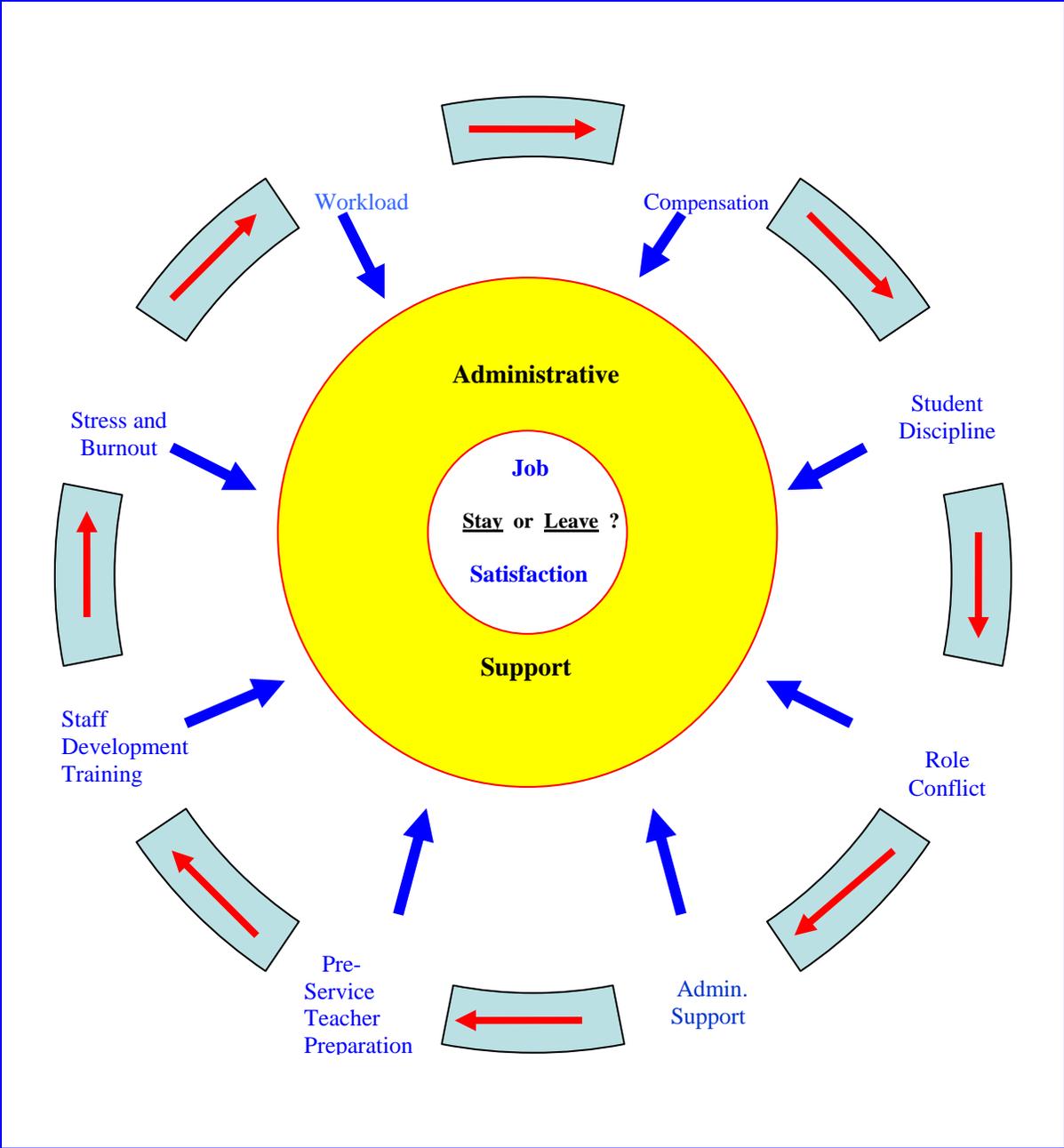


Figure 5. Factors predicting special education teacher retention (Walker, 2009).

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

This chapter presents research findings from analyzed data collected in this study. Survey methodology was utilized to obtain data from respondents. Analyzed data coupled with quantitative procedures aided to determine whether significant relationships existed between the predictor variables (*staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support*) and teacher retention among certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students in regions six and seven of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

This chapter also provides information of the regions that participated in this study, results of the data collection process, profile of the survey participants, and results of the analytical procedures utilized to support research questions (1) what are the factors that cause special education teachers who instruct students with emotional disabilities to leave the field? and (2) do teachers of students with emotional disabilities experience similar barriers to retention when compared to other special educators? In addition, a summary of the chapter will be presented.

#### Data Collection Procedures

Superintendents in Regions Six and Seven were contacted by electronic mail to obtain permission to conduct this study in their school districts. This study allowed two weeks for superintendents to respond to the request for survey distribution. During the initial response only nine superintendents replied granting permission for survey distribution. Following the initial request, non respondents received a second electronic mailing with supporting documents describing the full scope of the study and a personal request participation.. The second mailing yielded eight additional permissions for survey distribution. It was determined that several of the superintendents did not respond to the second request due to external circumstances, such as the emergency financial budgeting due to the current state of the economy and the annual winter break. This researcher decided to wait until the beginning of the second semester to send the third and final request for permission of survey distribution.

At the beginning of the second academic semester, this researcher mailed a third request to school divisions. This mailing yielded seven superintendents who granted permission to

survey their special education teachers. Overall, a total of 24 superintendents gave permission to complete the study in their school districts. Next, special education directors of the school districts received a request for the number of certified special education teachers who had emotionally disabled students on their current caseload and interacted with them on a daily basis. After receiving the number of special education teachers, this researcher mailed survey packets to special education directors of participating school districts, with the instruction to distribute the surveys to those teachers meeting criteria for this study. Table 1 highlights participating school districts, the number of individual surveys mailed to special education teachers and the total number of returned surveys used for this study.

A total of 252 surveys were mailed to special education teachers. At three week intervals, this researcher sent an email to participating special education directors reminding them to encourage special education teachers to complete and return the surveys. Participants of this study returned a total of 149 (55%) completed surveys to this researcher. All surveys appeared to be appropriate for the analysis of this study.

#### Profile of the Participants

The participating special education teachers received a seventy-nine question survey to complete and mail back to this researcher in a self-addressed stamped envelope. The two part survey was formatted in Likert-style fashion. The first part consisted of 64 questions derived from the eight factors extracted from the literature review this researcher considered to impact teacher retention. The second part consisted of 15 demographic questions targeting characteristics, such as age, race, gender, whether respondents are staying in their current positions, whether they are leaving their current positions, years of teaching experience in special education, years of experience teaching emotional disabled students, salary, current educational level, current teaching assignment, and instructional level. Table 2 outlines the results of responses to survey items from special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students.

Table 1

*Participating School Districts, Number of Surveys Mailed, Completed Surveys Received, Percentage Returned*

Teachers (n = 149)			
School District	Number Sent	Responses Received	Percentage Return
Grayson County	3	3	100%
Roanoke County	26	22	84%
Danville Public Schools	6	4	66%
Bristol City Schools	23	7	30%
Washington County	37	37	100%
Scott County	21	9	42%
Radford City	13	6	38%
Carroll County	4	3	75%
Lee County	26	13	50%
Franklin County	5	5	100%
Pulaski County	8	7	88%
Alleghany County	6	6	100%
Henry County	6	3	50%
Tazewell County	1	1	100%
Salem City Schools	7	2	29%
Martinsville city schools	3	2	67%
Smyth County	2	1	50%
Patrick County	1	1	100%
Pittsylvania County	6	2	33%
Wythe County	11	8	73%
Craig County Schools	3	0	0%
Floyd County Schools	1	0	0%
Covington City Schools	3	0	0%
Wise County Schools	36	0	0%

Analyzed data in Table 2 represent a higher number of certified special education teachers who plan on staying in their current positions (86%, n=122) compared to those certified special education teachers who plan to leave their current teaching assignments (14%, n=20). Of the special education teachers who plan on leaving their positions, four percent (4%, n=5) stated that the workload was overwhelming; one percent (1%, n=1) responded that compensation was inadequate; one percent (1%, n=2) planned to leave due to student misbehaviors; two percent (2%, n=3) stated they are leaving the field of emotional disturbance for another special education

assignment; three percent (3%, n=4) planned to leave the field for a general education position; and five percent (5%, n=7) responded to the area of “other” on the special education teacher survey.

When asked why they planned on staying in their current teaching assignment, thirteen percent (13%, n=18) of special educators recorded retirement as a major factor; one percent (1%, n=2) felt they received adequate compensation; and thirty-four (34%, n=48) explained that they enjoyed teaching students with emotional disabilities. Thirteen percent (13%, n=18) responded that proximity to school as most important; twenty-two (22%, n=31) stated positive school environment and personnel as reasons to stay in their current position; and six percent (6%, n=8) selected “other”.

Also, analyzed data categorized twenty-two percent (22%, n=30) of respondents as male special education teachers compared to seventy-eight percent (78%, n=112) female. Initially, it may be perceived that the percentages of male to female respondents are disproportionate. However, earlier research studies discuss disparity between gender (SpeNSE, 2002; National Education Association, 2004).

According to results of the teacher survey, age ranges of respondents were determined to be the following: nineteen percent (19%, n=27) were in the 20-30 year age range, twenty-five percent (25%, n=35) fell in the 31-40 age range, twenty-eight percent (28%, n=39) were determined to be in the 41-50 age range, twenty-four percent (24%, n= 34) in the 51-60 age range, and four percent (4%, n=6) were found to be in the 61-70 age range. The data analysis also identified less than one percent (.7%, n=1) respondents as American Indian/Alaskan Native, seven percent (7%, n=10) as African American, and ninety-one percent (91%, n=129) as Caucasian. In addition, the analysis recorded respondents’ educational levels as the following: forty-five percent (45%, n=64) at the bachelor’s level, forty-seven percent (47%, n=66) were determined to be at the master’s level, five percent (5%, n=7) were educational specialists, and two percent (2%, n=3) identified as having doctoral degrees.

When asked the number of years teaching in special education respondents reported that fourteen percent (14%, n=20) had one to three years of experience, fifteen percent (15%, n= 21) fell in the three to five year range, thirteen percent (13%, n= 18) had five to seven years of experience, and fifty-eight percent (58%, n= 82) possessed more than seven years experience in the field of special education.

Table 2

*Demographic Information for All Participants: Leavers, Stayers, Gender, Age, Race, Education Level, Number of Years Teaching Special Education, Number of Years Teaching Students with an Emotional Disability, Current Instructional Level, Educational Assignment Setting, and Compensation.*

Category	Descriptor	N	%
Stay Leave	Stay in Current Position	122	86
	Leave Current Position	20	14
Reasons to Stay	Enjoy Teaching ED Students	48	34
	School Environment/Personnel	31	22
	Retiring Soon	18	13
	Proximity to School	18	13
	Compensation	2	1
	Other	8	6
Reasons to Leave	Workload	5	4
	Leave For General Ed.	4	3
	Leave For Another Sped. Assnt.	3	2
	Student Behavior	2	1
	Compensation	1	1
	Other	7	5
Gender	Male	30	22
	Female	112	78
Age Group	20 to 30	27	19
	31 to 40	35	25
	41 to 50	39	28
	51 to 60	34	24
	61 to 70	6	4
Educational Levels	Bachelors	64	45
	Masters	66	47
	Educational Specialist	7	5
	Doctoral	3	2
Number of Years Teaching in Special Education	1-3 Years	20	14
	3-5 Years	21	15
	5-7 Years	18	13
	>7 Years	82	58
Number of Years Teaching Students With Emotional Disabilities	1-3 Years	25	18
	3-5 Years	23	16
	5-7 Years	16	11
	>7 Years	75	53

(Table 2 continued)

Table 2 continued

Current Instructional Level	Elementary School	35	25
	Middle School	42	30
	High School	63	40

*Demographic Information for All Participants: Leavers, Stayers, Gender, Age, Race, Education Level, Number of Years Teaching Special Education, Number of Years Teaching Students with an Emotional Disability, Current Instructional Level, Educational Assignment Setting, and Compensation.*

Category	Descriptor	N	%
Educational Assignment Setting	Full Inclusion	40	28
	Collaborative	68	48
	Self Contained	31	22
Compensation	30,000 to 40,000	79	56
	40,001 to 50,000	39	28
	51,001 to 60,000	16	11
	>60,000	6	4

Note: Results include percentages that were rounded and may not total 100%

The next question on the teacher survey asked for the number of years teaching students with emotional disabilities. The data from respondents are as followed: eighteen percent (18%, n= 25) had one to three years of experience, sixteen percent (16%, n= 23) expressed they had three to five years of experience, eleven percent (11%, n= 16) fell into the five to seven year range, and fifty-three percent (53%, n=75) were determined to have more than seven years experience teaching students with emotional disabilities.

When asked to reveal their current instructional level respondents recorded that twenty-five percent (25%, n=35) were assigned at the elementary level, thirty percent (30%, n=42) provided instruction to emotionally disabled students at the middle school level, and forty percent (40%, n= 63) indicated that they current provided instruction in high school settings.

Survey respondents also provided information regarding their current educational assignment setting. Results of the data analysis revealed that twenty-eight percent (28%, n=40) of special educators stated that they provided instruction in a fully inclusive educational settings, forty-eight percent (48%, n= 68) practiced within collaborative classrooms, and twenty-two percent (22%, n= 31) instructed emotionally disabled students in self-contained classroom settings.

The final demographic question of the survey asked special education teachers to state their current salary. Respondents reported that fifty-six percent (56%, n= 79) had a salary in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range, twenty-eight percent (28%, n= 39) fell into the \$40,000 to \$50,000 range, eleven percent (11%, n= 16) stated they were in the \$50,000 to \$60,000 range, and four percent (4%, n= 6) received more than \$60,000 in compensation.

### Data Analysis

This researcher utilized quantitative statistical methodology to analyze data retrieved from the special education teacher survey. The primary method utilized to secure and interpret participants' responses to the survey was Confirmatory Factor Analysis. According to Creighton, Coleman, and Adams (1997), confirmatory factor analysis identifies the underlying constructs in a specific data set, reduces the number of variables to make the data set more manageable, and helps to retain as much information as possible during the process. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis seeks to determine the relationship between the hypothesized measures and targeted latent variables, as well as determine the expectations about which variables will load on certain factors (Kim & Mueller, 1978b: 55).

Principal Component Analysis identified the constructs from responses to survey items on the teacher survey. This statistical method is used to decompose the original data into a set of linear variables (Field, 2009). This analysis extracted a total of twenty specific constructs with eigenvalues of 1.0 or greater. According to Kaiser (1960), all extracted constructs with eigenvalues of 1.0 or greater may be accepted as significant. However, to avoid less risk of error and a focus on factors with heavier loadings, this researcher increased the eigenvalues of all twenty extracted constructs from the Principal Component Analysis from 1.0 to 2.0 or greater. The results of the analysis revealed a total of seven constructs with eigenvalues greater than 2.0. The loading of these seven constructs accounted for a cumulative of forty-six percent (46.0) of the total variance of the Principal Component Analysis.

Although seven identified constructs exhibited eigenvalues of 2.0 or higher, three constructs emerged as having the strongest correlation and consistency among individual survey items. Table 3 gives a description of the three strongest constructs extracted during the Principal Component Analysis process.

Table 3

*Constructs, Extraction Total, Percentage of Variance, Cumulative Percentage*

Constructs	Eigenvalue Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Percentage
Construct 1	11.36	17.75	17.75
Construct 2	4.45	6.96	24.71
Construct 4	3.00	4.68	29.39

Construct one received an eigenvalue total of 11.36 that accounted for 17 percent of the total variance. A majority of the administrative support survey items loaded on this particular construct, which gave it strong correlation and high validity as a factor of teacher retention. Due to the strong relationship and consistent loadings among survey items, this researcher determined the construct to be the factor of *Administrative Support*.

The analysis extracted a second factor that exhibited a strong correlation among survey items on the special education teacher survey. This construct exhibited an eigenvalue of (4.45) and claimed 6.9 percent of total variance within the analysis. Additional analysis of surveyed items revealed adequate evidence of compensation loadings on this construct, that supported its' validity as a factor of teacher retention. Results confirmed the distinct characteristics of this construct to be the factor of *Compensation*.

The next construct extracted from the principal component analysis also revealed strong correlation among survey items, and identified as construct four. It had an eigenvalue of 3.00 and found to have 4.68 percent of the total variance. As with the first two constructs, the interpretation of the analysis supports the construct's validity as an entity affecting teacher attrition. Final interpretation identified the characteristics as the construct of *Staff Development*.

Table 4, shows the remaining constructs (3, 5, 6, & 7) of the principal component analysis. Procedures utilized to identify the first three constructs provided support for the analysis of the remaining content items of the teacher survey. The analysis revealed construct 3 as having an eigenvalue of 3.32 and a variance percentage of 5.18. This construct appeared to

lack consistency with factor loadings and exhibited less correlation among survey items. However, additional analysis of content data revealed evidence of characteristics supporting the identity of this construct as *Stress and Burnout*.

Analyzed data confirmed that construct 5 had an eigenvalue of 2.71 and a variance percentage of 4.23. This construct also attracted survey items but compared to other constructs lacked consistency and did not have a strong correlation across items within the analysis. However, the survey items that loaded on this construct provided enough support for this construct to be labeled as *Student Discipline*.

Table 4

*Constructs, Extraction Total, Percentage of Variance, Cumulative Percentage*

Constructs	Eigenvalue Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Percentage
Construct 3	3.32	5.18	34.57
Construct 5	2.71	4.23	38.80
Construct 6	2.36	3.70	42.50
Construct 7	2.00	3.13	45.63

Table 4 shows construct 6 extracting an eigenvalue of 2.36 among other constructs, as well as representing a 3.70 percent of the total variance. This construct received similar analysis as previous constructs and had various loading of survey items. In addition, it was found that this construct also lacked consistency among factor loadings and had weak correlation across survey items. However, the characteristics of survey items loading on this particular construct helped to solidify an identity of *Role Conflict*.

Construct 4 was validated to have an eigenvalue of 2.00 and a variance percentage of 3.13. Analysis of the principle component matrix revealed that although survey items loaded on this construct they were viewed as inconsistent and were not strongly correlated. However, factor

loadings considered to be significant provided sufficient evidence to label this construct *Workload*.

At the outcome of the Principal Component Analysis, seven individual survey items (13, 23, 33, 39, 43, 50, and 56) loaded randomly within the matrix. At first glance this researcher attempted to formulate the items into a construct, but the attempt yielded unsuccessful results due to poor correlation and consistency with identified constructs. This researcher determined that respondents may have interpreted the items differently on the survey, or the items appeared misleading due to variations in formatting.

### Answering the Research Questions

The purpose of this study sought to investigate if the factors *pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support*) influence the retention of certified special education teachers who work with emotionally-disabled students on a daily basis. In order determine if these factors were valid, procedures were utilized to support the research questions of (1) what are the factors that cause special education teachers who instruct emotionally disabled students to leave the field? and (2) do teachers of emotionally disabled students experience the same barriers to retention when compared to other special educators?

### *Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

The identity of constructs from responses to survey items on teacher surveys were determined through Confirmatory Factor Analysis methodology. Confirmatory Factor Analysis identifies the underlying constructs in a specific data set and reduces the number of variables to make the data set more manageable (Creighton, Coleman, & Adams, 1997).

Also, Confirmatory Factor Analysis determines relationships between constructs and variables, targets variables and determines specific loadings of constructs (Kim & Mueller, 1978b:55). Interpretation of survey responses was conducted through Principal Component Analysis. The principal component analysis revealed seven constructs with eigenvalues of 2.0 or higher from survey items. However, after further analysis of constructs and relationships between items, three strong constructs emerged as having consistent correlations of loadings of survey items from participants.

### *Research Question One*

The first research question investigated whether there is a relationship between the factors of *staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support* and certified special education teachers' decisions to either stay or leave their current working assignments. According to Confirmatory Factor Analysis, survey items loaded on seven constructs solidifying their validity as factors influencing teacher retention. Results also indicated that a relationship exists between these seven factors and job satisfaction among certified special educators who work with the emotionally-disabled. After further analysis the strongest correlation of survey items loaded on three specific constructs, which are (1) Administrative Support, (11.36), (2) Compensation (4.45), and (3) Staff Development (3.00).

These findings can suggest that certified special education teachers view the administration as the most important entity of support during daily instruction of emotionally disabled students. Also, it can be interpreted that if certified special education teachers are adequately compensated, they are more likely to stay in their current positions. In contrast, if they feel less compensated for their work the chances of leaving their teaching assignment increases. In addition, the perception that increased staff development will help improve teaching skills within the classroom and lack of training may lead to an increased number of less skilled and unmotivated certified teachers, thus reducing the retention rate of quality personnel.

Although the analysis of this study revealed that all seven factors influence teacher retention, however, respondents felt that the three major constructs (Administrative Support, Compensation, and Staff Development) have a greater impact with their employment decisions. Also, it can be interpreted that the remaining four constructs are underlying issues of teacher retention, that surface if they are not supported by the essence of the three major constructs of Administrative Support, Compensation, and Staff Development. In addition, results also confirm the construct of Administrative Support as the principal construct respondents found to have the most influence on teacher retention.

### *Research Question Two*

The second research question sought to determine whether teachers who instruct emotionally-disabled students experience the same barriers to retention when compared to other special education teachers. As previously stated in this study, three strong constructs emerged as

being discreet and having consistent correlation with survey items. The data also revealed that administrative support had the strongest correlation among the three, and was the major factor influencing the retention of certified teachers who work with emotionally-disabled students.

Further evidence to support this research question is confirmed through the comparison of a recent study completed by Turpin (2009). The author completed a study entitled *A Study Examining the Effects of Transformational Leadership Behaviors on the Factors of Teaching Efficacy, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment as Perceived by Special Education Teachers*. The author completed the study with various special educators who were employed full-time in region seven of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

A total of eleven school districts participated in the study that included sixty-three principals. The author used Confirmatory Factor Analysis to analyze constructs for questionnaire development. Results from the analysis revealed a five section Likert-style survey targeting special education teachers. Section one included items (1-10) targeting individual demographic information. Sections two through five involved survey items (11-75) that asked teachers to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding leadership behaviors, teaching efficacy, commitment, and job satisfaction. The survey also asked teachers to rate their overall level of satisfaction with their current teaching position, their intent to stay or leave within the next five years, and give the specific reason for either staying or leaving their current assignment. Two hundred fifty-five Likert-style surveys were sent to participating principals for distribution to all special education teachers.

According to the author, one hundred twenty-six surveys (n=126) were returned by participants. However, only one hundred twenty-one (n=121) of the surveys could be used as five participants were not special education teachers. This allowed for a usable return rate of forty-seven percent (47%). In comparison, this study also utilized a 79 question liker-style survey that was sent to 252 certified special education teachers working with emotionally-disabled students. One hundred forty-nine surveys (n=149) were returned which allowed this researcher a 55% usable return rate for analysis of the study.

Turpin (2009) used Principal Component Analysis to identify and extract constructs from teacher responses of the survey. The analysis yielded a total of eight constructs with eigenvalues of 1.0 or higher from participants' responses to survey items. These constructs and their values are; (1) Transformational Leadership (Construct 1=23.68, Construct 2=1.30), Teaching Efficacy (Construct

3=3.41, Construct 4=2.06), (3) Organizational Commitment (Construct 5=6.08, Construct 6=3.36), and (4) Job Satisfaction (Construct 7=1.42, Construct 8=2.76).

Although there were eight constructs identified, further analysis of factor loadings supported only four discreet constructs that had consistent patterns of correlations identified. The author utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to create equations for the four constructs by combining each survey item with factor loadings exceeding (.051) into their corresponding construct. Also, items not meeting the minimal standards were discarded. In addition, the author conducted reliability analysis on the final construct items and discarded one at a time, those items that reduced the construct reliability.

In addition, this researcher's study also utilized Principal Component Analysis during the identification and extractions of constructs from respondents survey items. During this process seven constructs were identified, however, after further item analysis three strong constructs emerged as having the strongest correlation and consistency among individual survey items. These constructs and their values were Administrative Support (11.36), Compensation (4.45), and Staff Development (3.00).

Turpin (2009) conducted a co-efficient alpha for each variable. Results of the co-efficient alpha ranged from (.800) to (.838) for each variable. The total reliability was (.975). The final scale constructs are as followed; Administrative Support (.987); Teaching Efficacy (.800); Organizational Commitment (.914); and Job Satisfaction (.975). Also, a Pearson R analysis was conducted to investigate effect size and the strength of relationship between variables.

Final results of the study revealed that perceived Administrative Support was the transformational leadership behavior recognized by surveyed participants. Correlation analysis between Administrative Support and Teaching Efficacy were not significant ( $r = -.077$ ,  $p > .05$ ) which states that there is no significant relationship between Administrative Support and Teaching Efficacy. Also, the author found that there was a significant correlation ( $r = .520$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between Administrative Support and Job Satisfaction. The author interpreted this as the more teachers perceive their administrator as supportive, the higher level of reported Job Satisfaction.

Results also revealed Transformational Leadership Behaviors and Organization Commitment as the second highest correlation ( $r = .629$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicated that the more teachers perceive their administrator as supportive, the higher their levels of commitment to their organization. Also, it

was found that no significant correlation ( $r = .098$ ,  $p > .05$ ) existed between Teaching Efficacy and Organizational Commitment.

Results also determined a strong correlation between Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment ( $r = .682$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The author discussed that as the level of job satisfaction increases, so does their reported levels of Organization Commitment. Another finding revealed that Teaching Efficacy does have a strong influence on job satisfaction ( $r = .241$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). According to the author, the more teachers perceive their sense of teaching efficacy, the higher the level of job satisfaction. The author also stated that Administrative Support was the major influence among all constructs measured.

In addition, teachers were asked how satisfied they were with their current teaching position. Results indicated that out of 119 respondents forty-eight (48%,  $n = 57$ ) reported to be satisfied, forty-one percent (41%,  $n = 49$ ) as satisfied, seven percent (7%,  $n = 8$ ) felt dissatisfied, and four percent (4%,  $n = 5$ ) stated to be very dissatisfied. Turpin (2009) mentioned that eighty-nine percent (89%) of special education teachers reported to be satisfied to some degree, while eleven (11%) had some level of dissatisfaction.

Of the 120 respondents who answered the question “do you plan to leave in the next five years”, fifty-eight (58%,  $n = 69$ ) said they planned on staying in their positions, while forty-two percent (42%,  $n = 51$ ) decided to leaving in five years. Also, twenty-eight percent (28%,  $n = 34$ ) selected “yes” and fourteen percent (14%,  $n = 17$ ) selected “not sure”.

Finally, the author mentioned that of the forty-two percent (42%,  $n = 51$ ) who said they planned on leaving in next five years or “not sure”, thirteen percent (13%,  $n = 16$ ) stated retirement as their main reason for leaving, eight percent (8%,  $n = 10$ ) mentioned that transferring to another administration or other position as part of their future, six percent (6%,  $n = 7$ ) recorded excessive job demands, five percent (5%,  $n = 6$ ) viewed administrative or district related issues as factors, four percent (4%,  $n = 5$ ) recorded salary/benefits as the top reason, two percent pointed out affective responses, and two percent (2%,  $n = 2$ ) reported personal reasons.

The comparisons of the two studies underscore the hypothesis that certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students experience the same barriers to retention as other special educators. Although the two studies had different methodologies, they were similar with measuring the barriers affecting job satisfaction among special education teachers. Further, both studies confirm *Administrative Support* as the strongest of all correlations of survey items from

respondents within each individual study. Table 5 highlights the results of correlations of the two studies in reference to the leading construct of administrative support.

Table 5

*Constructs, Extraction Total, Percentage of Variance, Cumulative Percentage*

Constructs	Eigenvalue Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Percentage
<hr/>			
Turpin (2009)			
Transformational Leadership			
<b>Administrative Support</b>	<b>23.68</b>	<b>69.66</b>	<b>69.66</b>
<hr/>			
Walker (2009)			
<b>Administrative Support</b>	<b>11.36</b>	<b>17.75</b>	<b>17.75</b>
<hr/>			

### Summary

This chapter explains the results of analyzed data used to determine if the predictors of pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support influence the retention of certified special education teachers who work with emotionally-disabled students.

Participants of the study included 149 certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students on a daily basis. Confirmatory Factor Analysis aided to develop, firm, and validate constructs for the special education teacher survey. Demographic profiles were outlined based on responses from special education teachers. Principal component analysis assisted with the extracting of constructs based on survey item loading from participants. The analysis identified a total of seven constructs with eigenvalues of 2.0 or greater. However, after further inquiry, three constructs (Administrative Support, Compensation, and Staff Development) emerged as having strong and consistent correlation among survey responses from participants.

The remaining four constructs (Stress and Burnout, Role Conflict, Student Discipline, and Workload) proved to be valid, but yielded inconsistent correlation between survey items. In

addition, seven survey items (13, 23, 33, 39, 43, 50, and 56) loaded randomly within the matrix. However, they were considered unsuccessful correlations due to poor consistency, and may have been misleading due to variations in formatting.

Further, outcomes of the Principal Component Analysis identified *Administrative Support* with the strongest correlations of all constructs. Results also indicated that respondents saw administrative support as the most effective factor in the retention of certified special education teachers who work with emotionally-disabled students.

A comparison analysis of this study and the results from Turpin (2009) revealed that teachers who instruct emotionally disabled students experience the same barriers to retention as other special educators. Further, both studies confirm *Administrative Support* as the highest correlated construct among survey items and exhibits the most influence regarding retention of special education teachers.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

Results of data analysis for this study are presented in chapter IV. Chapter V summarizes, discusses, and provides implications for the findings of this study, as well as outlines recommendations for future research. This chapter will provide insight of the factors affecting the retention of certified special education teachers who instruct emotionally-disabled students in various educational settings.

#### Summary and Discussion of Findings

Results of this study revealed that a strong correlation exists between the factors of Administrative Support, Compensation, and Staff Development. It is determined that these specific factors play a more significant role with the retention of certified special educators who work with emotionally-disabled students. The remaining factors of Student Discipline, Role Conflict, Stress and Burnout, and Workload exhibited less discreteness with correlation and consistency, but still considered to have relevancy with minor roles towards a teachers' decision to stay or leave their position. Research embedded within this study's literature review; validate these factors to have an influence on the retention of special education teachers.

As with many school districts across the nation, Administrative Support is viewed as a critical factor during the implementation and oversight of school-based or division wide programs that provide daily instruction for students with disabilities. Based on the results of this study, it can be interpreted that Administrative Support can either be a positive support or a negative influence with retaining qualified special educators. When the administrative support is present special educators have a favorable view of their positions and exhibit a positive commitment to their teaching assignment. Also, it is noted that to adequately perform their duties, certified special education teachers working with emotionally-disabled students require ongoing commitment of stabilized support from their school-based and central office administration.

When the support is noticed to be inconsistent, certified special educators do not feel validated with the work they perform, therefore, they decide to leave the field for other special education areas or out of field positions. This is evidenced through the analysis of survey items

on the special education teacher survey, as well as various additional comments written by respondents during this study. As previously stated, workforce conditions that encourage their capabilities and emphasize the worth of individuals contribute to greater retention (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001).

Outcomes of this study will allow school-based and central office administration to increase their knowledge to better understand the role, responsibilities, and daily needs of special educators as they work with the emotionally-disabled. The added knowledge will help school districts enhance their future policies and procedures as they strive to strengthen their pool of committed special educators that will provide effective programming for all school-based initiatives.

As previously mentioned, Compensation was found to be a strong factor in regards to special education teacher retention. Results of this study found that only 41% of certified special education teachers felt that their salary was adequate for their teaching assignment. Further, 55% of respondents noted that their salary was not comparable to other special educators instructing emotionally disabled students in other school districts. This outcome can be contributed to the differences in regions within the state. School districts in the rural southwestern part of the state have less population and are limited with financial resources; therefore, they offer less salary packages to their special education personnel. Special educators from urban school districts in northern and eastern parts of the state are paid higher salaries due to increased population, larger school districts and a higher financial resource base.

Through this study staff development was identified as a factor influencing the retention of special education teachers who work with emotionally-disabled students. Research indicates that the more teachers receive professional training, the better prepared they are to provide creative and effective instruction and classroom management skills for their students. Many school divisions offer staff development training as a way to maintain and increase the skills of their certified personnel.

This study found that although ongoing staff development was offered, only 42% of certified special educators felt that they received instructional strategies for the emotionally-disabled. In addition, 57% of special educators felt that the staff development in behavior management their district offers was not helpful. This can be interpreted that special educators in the two regions are in need of training that is specific to working with the emotionally-disabled

student. It can be stated that this lack of support in staff development training impacts their overall performance with this challenging population. Also, when this happens, other secondary the factors, such as workload, stress and burnout, student discipline, and role conflict begin to increase. When these factors increase, they place additional burden on the current teaching position. The added difficulty influences the certified special educators' decision to either stay or leave the current assignment.

The purpose of this study sought to investigate how certified special education teachers who work with emotionally-disabled students view pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support as factors influencing their decision to either stay or leave their teaching positions. To determine if these factors were valid in affecting special education teacher retention the following questions of (1) what are the factors that cause certified special education teachers who instruct emotionally-disabled students to leave the field? and (2) do certified teachers of emotionally-disabled students experience the same barriers to retention when compared to other special educators? was developed to support guided research in this particular inquiry. Also, individual constructs received validation through descriptive and quantitative procedures to answer research questions. The following sections summarize the findings of reported data from participants included in this study.

### *Demographic Findings*

This study transpired in regions six and seven with certified special education teachers who work with emotionally disabled students in elementary, middle, and high school settings in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Of the thirty-six school divisions solicited, only 24 school districts approved the distribution of the special education teacher survey. Some school superintendents did not respond to the solicitation and a few did not grant permission as they felt the timing was not appropriate due to the transitioning to newly appointed superintendents.

As previously stated in chapter 1, respondents to survey distribution involved certified special education teachers who instruct or interact with emotionally-disabled students on a daily basis. Special education directors from each school district discarded personnel who did not meet criteria for survey distribution. Also, data collected from special education teachers were self-reported, open to personal bias, as well as the possibility of being influenced from peer interaction.

This researcher forwarded a total of 252 surveys to special education directors to distribute to certified special education teachers within their school districts. Respondents returned one hundred forty-nine (n=149) surveys, that converted to a usable return rate of fifty-five percent (55%). Data from surveyed participants received detailed analysis through descriptive and statistical processes.

In reference to the participating population of this study, the final analysis of demographic information revealed that eighty-six percent (86%, n=122) of certified special education teachers planned to stay in their current teaching assignments compared to fourteen percent (14%, n=20) of those who stated that they were planning on leaving current positions. These numbers reflect that the majority of certified special educators were satisfied with their current special education assignments as they mentioned they received adequate compensation, enjoyed instructing the student population, had close proximity to school, and having a supportive administration.

It is also noted that that the total number of leavers could be skewed due to the state of the current economy at the time of this study, which forced many school districts in the two regions to manipulate their current operating budgets, as well as plan for shortfalls for the upcoming school year. These events may have caused certified special educators to act with caution and delay their efforts of leaving their current teaching assignments for other areas in special education or out of field opportunities. Further, analyzed data from this study revealed leavers stating that insufficient compensation, student misbehavior and interests in other special education or out of field opportunities as their major reasons for leaving their current teaching assignments.

Participants of this study were represented by 22% male and 78% female. However, as evidenced by this study the disparity between genders among special educators continues to hold true in today's educational establishments as school districts employ and retain personnel to work with their special education population. Although these numbers are not exact figures as stated in earlier research studies, such as SpeNSE (2002) and by the National Education Association (2004), the disparity gap among male to females in this study appears to underscore the gender trend that is currently represented across the nation. In addition, it is noted that earlier studies also support the low percentage of male teachers in the special education field to be linked with low compensation and perception of societal gender roles.

According to the results of this study, 28% of surveyed respondents reported to be between 41 to 50 years of age. Analyzed data confirmed this to be the largest group among respondents to the special education teacher survey. Of the total number of respondents 72% were between 20 to 50 years old. In comparison, 28% of participants fell between the 50 to 70 year age range. Based on this trend, the two regions in this study may experience an impact with retention of certified special education teachers due to possible retirement participation at the end of the academic school year.

Also, in reference to basic demographics, further analysis of data indicated that one percent (.07%, n=1) of participants were American Indian/Alaskan Native, seven percent (7%, n=10) of respondents were considered African American and Ninety-one percent (91%, n=129) reported to be Caucasian. In addition, 45% of certified special educators possessed a bachelor degree; forty-seven percent instructed with masters level certifications, while 5% percent reported to be educational specialists. Also, two percent (2%) of special educators had doctorate degrees. This is a reflection that the two regions employed a high number of certified special educators to work with their special education population. Also, based on the percentage of those certified special educators who planned on leaving their teaching position, this exiting will impact the existing pool of qualified personnel and require the school district to make efforts to seek equally certified special educators to recover personnel losses.

When determining the number of years teaching in special education, 58% of respondents stated they had 7 or more years of service in the field. Final results determined this age range to be the largest within the study. Also, it was reported that fourteen percent (14%) of special educators had 1-3 years experience and fifteen percent (15%) obtained 3-5 years experience. In addition, thirteen percent (13%) of respondents stated they had 5-7 years of experience in the field. Based on this data, more than half of the certified teaching personnel employed in the two regions are experienced special educators. As previously mentioned earlier in this chapter, the impact of leavers within this population could alter the numbers of qualified personnel, therefore, reducing the district's retention rate among its pool of certified special educators.

The results of my study also surveyed the number of years certified special educators acquired instructing emotionally-disabled students on a daily basis. Analyzed data indicated that 53% of certified special educators reported to have more than seven years of experience in this particular area. The data also indicated that eighteen percent (18%) of special education

personnel had 1-3 years experience in the field. Results revealed that sixteen percent (16%) possessed 3-5 years experience and eleven percent (11%) reported to have between 5-7 years experience with the population. These outcomes solidify that the two participating regions employed a majority of special education teachers who were highly qualified to instruct the school districts' emotionally disabled population.

This study was completed with certified special education teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels from public schools in southwestern Virginia. Of the total respondents, twenty-five percent (25%) provided instruction to emotionally-disabled students at the elementary level. Thirty percent (30%) of special education teachers provided instruction in middle school settings, and forty percent (40%) reported that they interacted daily with emotionally disabled students at the high school level. These results indicate that seventy percent (70%) of respondents participating in this study were certified special educators assigned to positions at the secondary level. Based on my experience as a special educator who has worked in positions at both the elementary and secondary levels in public and private sectors, each level of instruction differs with school atmosphere, school size, teacher role, workload, and student population. It could be interpreted that the decision for a certified secondary special educator to stay or leave their teaching position may be influenced by their view and experience regarding the specific differences among instructional levels. Although the total of elementary respondents was only 25%, they may exhibit many of the same barriers as they interact daily with emotionally-disabled students within their school settings.

Participants of this two region study indicated they provided support to emotionally-disabled students in a variety of instructional settings. Analyzed data of this study revealed that forty-eight percent (48%) of certified special educators provided instruction to emotionally-disabled students in a collaborative educational setting. To add, twenty eight percent (28%) of special educators stated they provided instruction in fully inclusive classrooms. Further, it was noted that twenty-two percent (22%) mentioned instructing emotionally-disabled students in self-contained settings.

Approximately fifty-six percent (56%) of all certified special education teachers reported they earned between 30, 000 to 40,000 dollars annually. Interpretation of all surveyed items considered this percentage to be the largest in regards to salary compensation. Also, twenty-eight percent (28%) stated they earned more than 40,000 dollars compared to eleven percent (11%) of

special educators who earned an annual salary above 50,000 dollars. Further, only four percent (4%) of certified special educators reported to receive compensation of more than 60,000 dollars annually.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

This study utilized Confirmatory Factor Analysis to identify constructs from responses to items on the special education teacher survey. This process aided in the reduction of specific variables measured and makes the data set more manageable (Creighton, Coleman, & Adams, 1997). Confirmatory Factor Analysis determines relationships between identified constructs and variables, puts an emphasis on selected variables and determines specific loadings of constructs (Kim & Mueller, 1978b:55).

Interpretation of responses from participants of this study was conducted through Principal Component Analysis, a statistical method used to decompose the original data into a set of linear variables (Field, 2000). This initial analysis revealed seven individual constructs with eigenvalues of 2.0 or higher from survey items reported from certified special education teachers. Further analysis solidified the validity of the constructs and their relationships between survey items reported from participants of this study. Final results of the Principal Component Analysis yielded three strong individual constructs that exhibited consistency and maintained strong correlation among survey items.

### Findings of study

To analyze data retrieved from the special education teacher survey this study utilized the principal component analysis procedure. Initially, the analysis extracted twenty constructs with eigenvalues of 1.0 or greater. Although Kaiser's (1960) theory of significance was used to validate earlier findings, this study increased the eigenvalue to 2.0 to avoid less error and to focus on factors with heavier loadings. Final results from this process revealed a total of seven identified constructs with eigenvalues greater than 2.0. In addition, the loadings of these seven constructs accounted for forty-six percent (46.0%) of the total variance of the Principal Component Analysis.

Upon further analysis of individual constructs when coupled with survey items, three constructs emerged as having the strongest correlation and consistency when compared to all other factors measured. The first construct identified had a majority loading of the administrative

support survey items, which gave it strong correlation and high validity as a factor of special education teacher retention. Due to the strong relationship and consistent loadings among survey items this construct was identified as Administrative Support.

The second construct revealed adequate evidence of consistent loadings of compensation survey items. These findings supported this construct's validity as a factor of special education teacher retention. Individual characteristics provided strong support for this construct to be categorized as Compensation. The third construct extracted from the principal component analysis also revealed strong correlation among survey items presented by respondents participating in this study, and was identified as construct four. However, further analysis determined that five out of the eight staff development survey items loaded as a cluster within the principal component analysis. The items had strong correlation and exhibited consistency across content items. As with previous constructs mentioned within this study, interpretation of these results supports the validity of this construct as an entity influencing special education teacher retention. Based on characteristics of loaded survey items, this construct was determined to be Staff Development.

The remaining four constructs possessed less consistency and determined to be poorly correlated when coupled with survey items provided by respondents. According to the principal component analysis, the fourth identified construct possessed three out of seven stress and burnout survey item loadings, with two of the constructs yielding eigenvalues of 2.0 or greater. The analysis revealed this construct to be Stress and Burnout.

Based on data retrieved from the special education teacher survey, the fifth construct Student Discipline revealed that four of the student discipline survey items loaded on this construct. However, only one survey item had an eigenvalue of 2.0 or greater. The characteristics and strength of survey loadings of this construct supports its identity as a factor of special education teacher retention.

According to the principal component analysis, the next construct identified recorded a total percentage of 2.36 and exhibited a variance of 3.70. Upon further analysis of data retrieved from the special education teacher survey, four of the eight role conflict survey items loaded consistently on this particular construct. Based on this validity of these facts, this construct was found to be Role Conflict.

The final construct of the principal component analysis was identified by the strength of its correlation between survey items from the special education teacher survey. Interpretation of the analysis revealed that four of the eight workload items loaded consistently on this construct. However, as with previously mentioned constructs, only two items loaded with eigenvalues of 2.0 or greater. Based on the strength and consistency of loaded survey items, this construct was identified as Workload.

Results of this study also indicate that certified special education teachers view administrative support, compensation, and staff development as the three major factors that influence special education teachers' decisions to either stay or leave their teaching assignments. In addition, this study revealed that special education teachers view administrative support as the most critical factor affecting retention among certified special education teachers instructing emotionally-disabled students.

In contrast with previous studies administrative support is critical to all aspects of job satisfaction (Gersten, 1995). Previous researchers discuss that in order to have satisfied teaching personnel, it is important to promote positive levels administrative support. Further, positive levels of administrative support will improve the commitment of teachers with positions in their school districts and will increase the satisfaction with their jobs (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Also, according to Brownell, Smith and McNellis (1997), improvements of the work environments and enhanced teacher preparation training leads to the success of reducing attrition among special education teachers.

The comparison analysis of this study and Turpin's (2009) results reveal those teachers who instruct emotionally disabled students experience the same barriers to retention as other special educators. For example, both studies discuss that increased administrative support leads to increased job satisfaction, therefore, increasing a special educator's decision to stay in their current teaching position. Also, special education teachers develop and maintain a positive sense of organizational commitment when they feel supported by school administration. In addition, both studies discussed that a positive sense of personal skills and training towards instructing students with disabilities increases the chance that they will stay in their current teaching assignment.

## Research Question One

The first research question investigated whether there is a relationship between the eight factors of *pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support* and certified special education teachers' decisions to either stay or leave their current working assignments. The findings of this study support earlier research and give validity to this hypothesis.

According to Confirmatory Factor Analysis, survey items loaded on seven of the eight constructs solidifying their validity as factors influencing teacher retention. The seven constructs are *staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support*. Also, results indicated that a relationship does exist between these seven factors and job satisfaction among certified special education teachers who work with emotionally-disabled students. After further analysis, the strongest correlation of survey items loaded on three specific constructs. These constructs are identified as Administrative Support, Compensation, and Staff Development.

As previously mentioned, interpretation of findings suggested that certified special education teachers view the administration as the most important entity of support during their daily instruction of emotionally-disabled students. Also, it can be interpreted that if teachers are adequately compensated; they are more likely to stay in their current positions. Also, if they feel less compensated for their work, the chances of leaving their teaching assignment increases. In addition, the perception that increased staff development will help improve teaching skills within the classroom, while the lack of training may lead to an increased number of less skilled and unmotivated teachers, thus reducing the retention rate of quality personnel.

Although the analysis of this study revealed that all seven factors influence teacher retention, however, respondents felt that the three major constructs (Administrative Support, Compensation and Staff Development) have a greater impact with their employment decisions. It can be perceived that the three major constructs serve as a foundation that supports the four remaining individual constructs (stress and burnout, student discipline, role conflict and workload). It is also interpreted that the four constructs are considered secondary underlying issues of teacher retention that surface and negatively impact teacher performance and job satisfaction, if not supported by the three major constructs over an extended period of time. Also, results confirmed the construct of Administrative Support as the principal construct respondents found to have the most influence on teacher retention.

As previously mentioned in chapter three, the original framework consisted of seven factors extracted from the literature review. However, through additional informal interviews and the survey information analyzed through the Confirmatory Factor Analysis, the predictor *workload* was identified by participants as a factor that influences the retention of certified special education teachers. Figure 6 provides a pictorial framework to support the outcomes of this study.

### Research Question Two

The second research question investigated whether certified special education teachers experience the same barriers to retention as other special educators. It is determined that the results of this study support this hypothesis. Analyzed data revealed that three strong constructs surfaced with discreteness, consistency, and strongly correlated with survey items on the special education teacher survey. These constructs were labeled as Administrative Support, Compensation, and Staff Development.

Also, administrative support yielded the strongest correlation of survey items provided by respondents, and was determined to be the major factor influencing the retention of certified teachers who work with emotionally-disabled students. Further evidence to support this research question and hypothesis was confirmed through the comparison to Turpin's (2009) study entitled *A Study Examining the Effects of Transformational Leadership Behaviors on the Factors of Teaching Efficacy, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment as Perceived by Special Education Teachers*. Turpin (2009) completed a study with various special education teachers who were employed full-time in region seven of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Results of the study identified Administrative Support as the transformational leadership behavior identified by certified special education teachers.

According to Turpin (2009), no correlation existed between Administrative Support and Teaching Efficacy ( $r = -.077, p > .05$ ), which also revealed no significant relationship between Administrative Support and Teaching Efficacy. However, the author did find a significant correlation ( $r = .520, p < .01$ ) between Administrative Support and Job Satisfaction. It was determined that the more teachers view their administrator as supportive with their teaching role, the higher they rate their Job Satisfaction of their position.

Also, results of this study indicated Transformational Leadership Behaviors and Organization Commitment as the second highest correlation ( $r = .629, p < .01$ ). This was interpreted as the more teachers view their administrator as supportive, the more they are to commit to staying with their

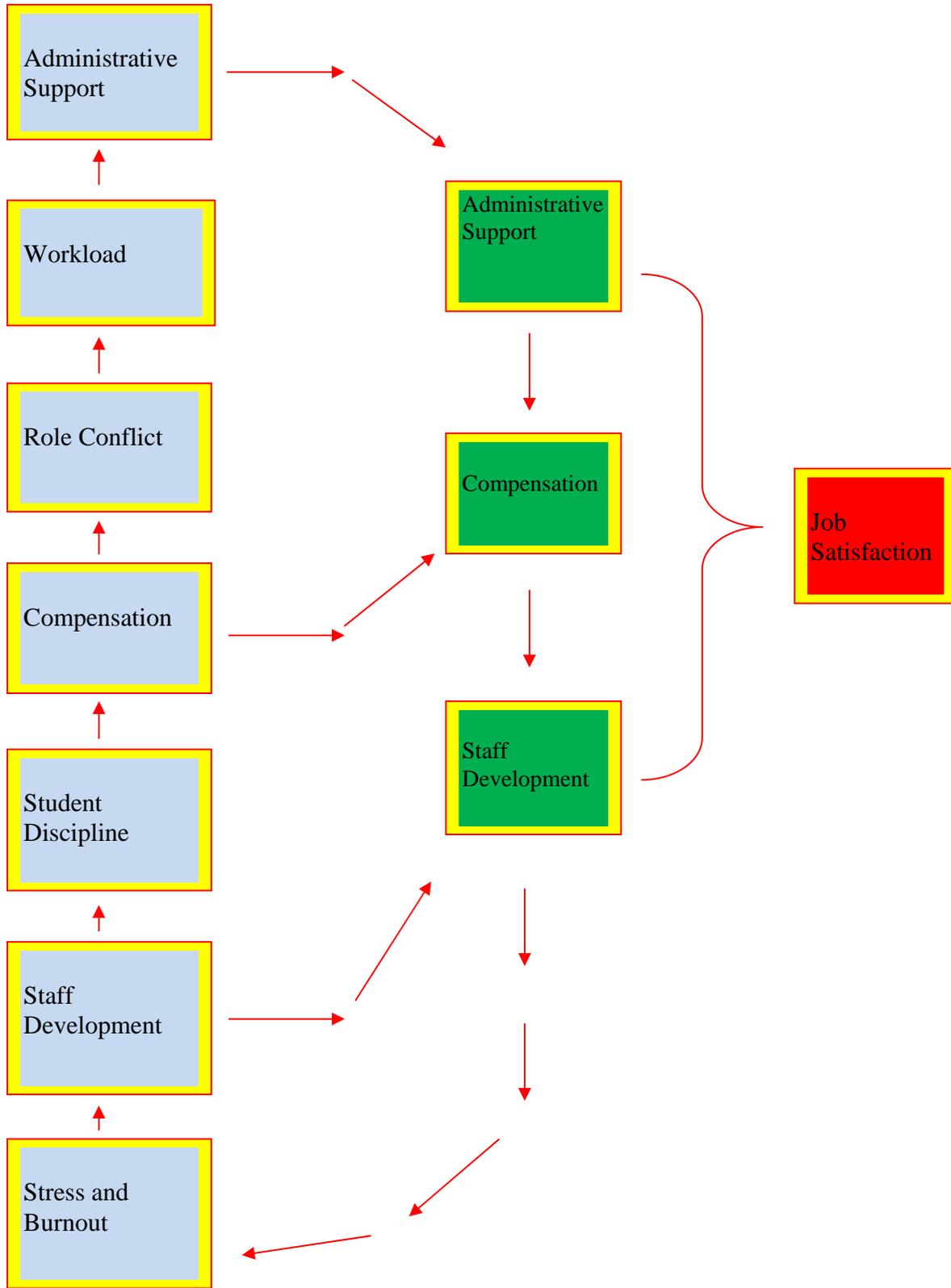


Figure 6. Factors predicting special education teacher retention. (Walker, 2009).

current organization. Also, Turpin (2009) mentioned that there was no significant correlation ( $r = .098$ ,  $p > .05$ ) between Teaching Efficacy and Organizational Commitment.

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Final results revealed that Job Satisfaction and Organization Commitment shared a strong correlation ( $r = .682$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The author mentioned that when special educators' job satisfaction increases, so does their commitment towards their current organization. Also, Turpin (2009) found a strong correlation between Teaching Efficacy and Job Satisfaction. ( $r = .241$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These results were interpreted as the more teachers view their sense of teaching efficacy, the more they are satisfied with their position. Also, Turpin (2009) discussed that Administrative Support was the major influence among all constructs measured.

In addition, teachers were asked how satisfied they were with their current teaching position. Of one hundred nineteen respondents forty-eight (48%,  $n = 57$ ) said they were very satisfied with their job, forty-one percent (41%,  $n = 49$ ) felt satisfied, seven percent (7%,  $n = 8$ ) mention they were dissatisfied, and four percent (4%,  $n = 5$ ) were very dissatisfied. Turpin (2009) stated that eighty-nine percent (89%) of special educators were satisfied to some degree, while eleven (11%) stated they had some level of dissatisfaction.

Results indicated that of the 120 respondents who answered the question "do you plan to leave in the next five years", fifty-eight (58%,  $n = 69$ ) said they planned to stay in their positions, while forty-two percent (42%,  $n = 51$ ) mentioned that they planned to leave within five years. Also, twenty-eight percent (28%,  $n = 34$ ) selected "yes" and fourteen percent (14%,  $n = 17$ ) selected "not sure".

Finally, the author discussed that of the forty-two percent (42%, n=51) who planned to leave within five years, or “not sure”, thirteen percent (13%, n=16) selected retirement as their main reason. Eight percent (8%, n=10) felt that transferring to a different area of administration or other position was in their future, while eight percent (8%, n=10) decided to leave because of increasing job demands. Six percent (6%, n=7) stated they were leaving due to administrative or district-wide issues. Also, five percent (5%, n=6) of special education teachers wanted to leave due to poor compensation. In addition, four percent (4%, n=5) stated affective responses, and two percent (2%, n=2) mentioned they decided to leave due to personal decisions.

Finally, the comparisons of the two studies underscore the hypothesis that certified special education teachers who instruct emotionally disabled students experience similar barriers to retention as other special educators. Although the two studies possessed different methodologies, they parallel with how they measure the barriers that influence job satisfaction among special educators.

In Turpin’s (2009) study administrative support extracted an eigenvalue of 23.6 percent that yielded a 69.66 percent of the total variance. Results of data analysis of this study identified administrative support with an eigenvalue of 11.36 percent and a variance percentage of 17.75 percent, that proved to be the highest percentage in total variance compared to other factors measured. Further, the two studies solidify *Administrative Support* with the strongest correlation between survey items from respondents within each individual study.

### Implications for Study

Maintaining retention of qualified special education teachers to instruct emotionally disabled students continues to be at the forefront of today’s educational institutions. Over the years it has been an area of difficulty for many school districts and the private sectors alike. In addition, specific stressors and frustrations, both from within and outside the classroom, are identified areas associated with the dissatisfaction of the teachers who instruct emotionally disabled students (Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

#### *Special Education Teachers*

As previously mentioned in chapter two, IDEIA federal legislation and the No Child Left Behind Act calls for all school districts to employ highly qualified teaching personnel and holds the district accountable for the quality of student achievement for all students (NCLB, 2001). In

addition, difficulty retaining special educators is well supported by research within the literature review of this study. The literature review also lends support to the current hypothesis that staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support are factors that influence the retention of certified special education teachers who instruct emotionally-disabled students.

Final results of this study provide evidence that special education teachers view staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support as valid factors impacting their decisions to either stay or leave the profession. Outcomes also confirm that certified special educators view administrative support, compensation, and staff development as the three major factors that influence their employment decisions.

Based on loading of survey items, respondents viewed the four remaining factors of student discipline, role conflict, stress and burnout, and workload as secondary entities that become problematic and effect their job satisfaction when not supported by the three factors of administrative support, compensation, and staff development.

### *Administrators*

School-based administrators may benefit from the outcomes of this study through its' focus on the factors influencing job satisfaction, and the daily expectations of the roles and various responsibilities special educators face in collaborative and self-contained educational settings. Analyzed data revealed that administrators can help with the retention of certified teachers by clarifying their role and job expectations early in their teaching assignment. The clarification would help teachers understand their role, as well as provide support with the emotional workload they experience on a daily basis. Results of this study can aid school based administrators in reducing the stress level of their special education personnel by supporting them during student lead crisis situations. Further, administrators can support teachers by promoting themselves as a creative leader when practicing individual and school-wide student intervention practices.

It is also noted that school administrators can help improve the overall performance of their special education personnel by providing periodic encouragement and healthy criticism on a regular basis. School based administrators can support certified special educators with adequate school supplies, as well as training specific to the emotionally disabled population they work with on a daily basis. In addition, final results of this study indicated administrative support as the most

consistent construct and exhibited the strongest correlation among all constructs within the component analysis of the special education teacher survey.

Also, to strengthen the current hypothesis, the results of this study were compared to a recent study involving surveyed participants from a similar educational field and region. The factor of administrative support paralleled between the two studies as the most significant factor influencing the retention among certified special education personnel.

### *Central Office*

The findings of this study validate the problematic issue that school districts face of maintaining qualified special educators for the instruction of emotionally-disabled students. As compliance with federal regulations among highly qualified teaching personnel continue to be at the forefront of all school district's goals, the need to fill the void in this specialized area continues to be critical. Results of this study can aide school districts with enhancing their retention policies and procedures, as well as ongoing relevant training that reflect how certified special education teachers are supported in future positions that involve working with emotionally-disabled students. Also, this study can provide central office personnel with increased knowledge of the trends and characteristics that may influence the pool of existing and future special educators, and their decisions to stay or leave their teaching assignments.

### *Preparation Programs*

Evidence suggests that the more beginning teachers are prepared and supported the higher their success as special educators. The same could be said for beginning administrators who take on the task as instructional leaders within their districts. Although the daily responsibilities of the two professions may parallel with supporting special education students, their educational programs of study differ on many levels. The findings of this study captures the reality that school districts and university preparation programs could collaborate to create ideas that may enhance the coursework of existing teacher and administrative preparation programs. Ideas of such practice could include the understanding of the roles of both professions and their overall scope of training. The coursework will provide each profession with the knowledge that can aid in supporting one another as a team while working with the emotionally disabled population.

The following coursework may be of additional benefit for the school based administrator by providing a clearer understanding of the daily responsibilities of the special educator. The added

knowledge will allow administrators to better support their certified special education personnel, as well help maintain teacher retention levels. The areas of training include an overall understanding of cognitive and educational-based assessments, overview of positive behavioral supports, crisis management, practice and manipulation of instructional materials, and the understanding of how stress and emotional factors affect special educators during their experiences of working with the emotionally disabled population.

The two entities could maintain a focus of change to incorporate the development of such guided practice that will strengthen the relationship between the two entities. Also, the positive experiences could lead to increasing the retention of both professions who have an interest in the success of the emotionally disabled population within the educational setting.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between the variables of *pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, workload, and administrative support* and teacher retention among certified special educators who work with emotionally-disabled students in regions six and seven of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Overall findings of this study validated relationships between all seven factor variables and survey items at various levels on the special education teacher survey. Also, it was determined that participants viewed Administrative Support, Compensation, and Staff Development as the three major factors influencing their decisions whether to stay or leave their current teaching positions.

In addition, this study revealed that administrative support was the most consistent factor with the strongest correlation among all constructs measured. The remaining four factors of Stress and Burnout, Student Discipline, Role Conflict, and Workload had significant correlation, but based on their strength of loading patterns of surveyed items, they were interpreted to be secondary entities that are enhanced by the presence or absence of the major three factors.

Based on the literature review of this study, the seven factors measured were found to be strong thematic factors influencing special education teacher retention. However, future research could target Administrative Support, Compensation, and Staff Development as the three major factors influencing teacher retention and incorporate the supporting four factors (Stress and Burnout, Student Discipline, Role Conflict, and Workload) as imbedded questions measured within the study's survey.

Although this study involved certified special education teachers in regions six and seven of southwestern, Virginia, it had limitations that could determine different outcomes of items measured. Only those certified special education teachers of various educational levels who worked with emotionally-disabled students from rural areas of southwestern, Virginia were surveyed through quantitative methodology. Other special and general educators were excluded as selected participants included those special educators with emotionally disabled students on their individual caseloads.

Future study including all special education categories will be a beneficial body of research. The input of these special educators could yield valuable data regarding their interaction with emotionally-disabled students, data to strengthen the retention pool of qualified special educators, and improve the overall instruction of students with the disability.

Finally, a statewide study to include the selection of qualified special educators from all regions may provide valuable outcomes towards retention due to larger geographical school districts and varied demographic representation. The additional information will strengthen the validity of the sampled population and provide a clearer representation of special educators as they give voice to job satisfaction, as well as their views of what influences their decisions to either stay or leave their current teaching assignments.

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## APPENDIX A

### PERMISSION TO USE THE FACTORS AFFECTING JOB SATISFACTION AND TEACHER RETENTION FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS SURVEY

<b>Date:</b>	Tue, 19 Feb 2008 17:55:54 -0500
<b>From:</b>	<a href="mailto:anwalke3@vt.edu">anwalke3@vt.edu</a> 
<b>To:</b>	<a href="mailto:parks@vt.edu">parks@vt.edu</a> 
<b>Subject:</b>	permission to use instrument

Dr. Parks,

My name is Tony Walker and I am working with Dr. Creighton on completing my dissertation in Administration and Supervision of Special Education. My area of study is retention of ED teachers. I would like to get your permission to utilize an instrument that you and Karen Giacommetti developed in 2005 to obtain data from beginning teachers regarding job satisfaction. I would like to enhance the instrument and its formatting to fit my objective of obtaining data from ED teachers regarding the factors that cause them to leave the field of special education for other professions. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Tony Walker.

<b>Date:</b>	Tue, 26 Feb 2008 16:43:44 -0500
<b>From:</b>	"GIACOMETTI, KAREN S" < <a href="mailto:KAREN.GIACOMETTI@pps.k12.va.us">KAREN.GIACOMETTI@pps.k12.va.us</a> > 
<b>To:</b>	<a href="mailto:anwalke3@vt.edu">anwalke3@vt.edu</a> 
<b>Subject:</b>	[No Subject]

*This message was written in a character set other than your own. If it is not displayed correctly, **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** to open it in a new window.*

Hi Tony -- of course, you may use my instrument. I am delighted and would also like to see a copy of the enhanced instrument. Please use the following notation on the revised instrument: The original version of this instrument was developed by Karen Giacommetti and is in Giacommetti, K.S. (2005). Factors affecting job satisfaction and retention of beginning teachers. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA. Used with permission of the author. Keep in touch --- thanks.  
Karen

APPENDIX B  
FACTORS AFFECTING JOB SATISFACTION AND TEACHER RETENTION FOR  
BEGINNING TEACHERS SURVEY

*David Parks*

*Karen S. Giacometti*

Factors Affecting Job Satisfaction and  
Teacher Retention for Beginning Teachers

**Instructions:** Please read each sentence carefully and circle  
your response.

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree,  
D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

PLEASE DO NOT OMIT ANY ITEM.

1. My salary adequately meets my needs. SA A D SD
2. The induction program for new teachers was not long enough. SA A D SD
3. The social issues that my students face were a shock to me. SA A D SD
4. The salary for teachers in my geographical area is comparable to the salaries of other people with the same level of education. SA A D SD
5. As part of the professional development plan for new teachers, I am given the opportunity to observe and seek advice from experienced teachers. SA A D SD
6. Many businesses in my community have created partnerships with the schools. SA A D SD
7. My district provides a lucrative retirement package. SA A D SD
8. My district stresses professional development as a way of increasing the skill level of teachers. SA A D SD
9. I am satisfied with the way that my district spends money. SA A D SD
10. My district included a lot of "perks," such as relocation costs and coupons from local merchants, in their recruiting process. SA A D SD
11. The mentoring program in my district has been a useful program as it gave me the opportunity to discuss problems with an experienced teacher. SA A D SD

12. The community has many resources available to deal with social problems of young people. SA A D SD
13. My district pays an extra stipend for hard-to-fill positions. SA A D SD
14. Administrators ensure that new teachers are not overwhelmed in their new assignments. SA A D SD
15. The parents or guardians of my students rarely return my calls. SA A D SD
16. My coursework specifically dealt with assessing students' abilities. SA A D SD
17. The entire staff takes part in creating the objectives for the school's yearly plan. SA A D SD
18. There is much growth potential in the education field. SA A D SD
19. My courses in college prepared me to teach the curriculum for the courses that I have been assigned. SA A D SD
20. My administrators deal with difficult students very effectively. SA A D SD
21. My job has very few stressful days. SA A D SD
22. More than one semester of student teaching is needed to be an effective beginning teacher. SA A D SD
23. I have anxiety attacks when I think of going to work. SA A D SD

24. The joy of teaching young people keeps me motivated year after year. SA A D SD
25. I feel confident that I have the skills necessary to perform my duties. SA A D SD
26. Teachers in my school work as a team to ensure student achievement. SA A D SD
27. I feel that I am making a difference in the lives of children. SA A D SD
28. Classroom discipline was addressed in very few of my teacher education classes. S A A D SD
29. I have a strong commitment to the field of education. SA A D SD
30. An induction program held before the start of the school year has helped me prepare for the classroom on the first day of school. SA A D SD
31. I feel burned out by the end of September. SA A DSD
32. My job is too frustrating for me. SA A D SD
33. My school has a positive environment in which to teach. SA A D SD
34. The stress on my job reduces my confidence as a teacher. SA A D SD
35. I feel challenged in my job as a teacher. SA A D SD

Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire

## Demographic Data

36.  I plan to stay in the profession.  
 I plan to leave the profession.

37.  If you plan to leave, state the reason why you  
Are leaving.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

38.  Age at last birthday

39. Race:

American Indian or Alaskan Native

Asian or Pacific Islander

Hispanic

Black, not of Hispanic origin  
factors

White, not of Hispanic origin

40. Gender:

Male

to

Female

rate.

41. Years in Education:

First Year

Second Year

Third Year

stamped

42. My teaching assignment is:

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

43. My Marital Status is:

Single  Married

44. My current salary is:

45. My final GPA in my teacher preparation  
program was:

Below a 2.0

Between 2.0-2.5

Between 2.51-3.0

Between 3.01-3.5

Over a 3.5

46. I became a teacher through a:

traditional (4 or 5 year teacher  
preparation program).

alternative certification program.

47. My school district is considered to be:

in a rural setting.

in a suburban setting.

in an urban setting

48. The state where I am employed:

\_\_\_\_\_

49. If you are leaving the profession, state one

factor that would have changed your  
decision:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Colleague:

The retention of new teachers is a challenge facing school

districts across the country. This is a study of the

that effect the satisfaction of beginning teachers

Your responses are vital to this study. The information  
gained will help schools and local school districts

understand how to more effectively deal with new  
teachers in an effort to increase their retention

All information provided will be confidential. The  
number, which appears on the survey and envelope, will

be used to monitor the returns. A self-addressed,

envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you, in advance for your help in gaining  
information about the teaching profession.

Sincerely,

Karen S. Giacometti

David Parks

- \_\_\_ Below \$30,000
- \_\_\_ Between \$30,000-\$35,000
- \_\_\_ Over \$35,000
- \_\_\_ in a suburban setting.
- \_\_\_ in an urban setting.

Doctorate Candidate

Professor

Table 14

*Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the Original Predictor Variables*

Scale	N (Items)	M (Scale Mean) (Item mean)	Scale <u>SD</u>	Alpha
Compensation (Items: 1, 4, 7, 10, 13)	5	10.62 (2.12)	2.26	.57
Preservice preparation (Items: 16, 19, 25, 28R)	4	11.07 (2.77)	2.06	.55
External forces (Items: 3R, 6, 9, 12, 15R)	5	12.78 (2.56)	2.11	.43
School culture (Items: 14, 17, 20, 26, 33)	5	13.93 (2.79)	2.78	.73
Inservice training (Items: 2R, 5, 8, 11, 30)	5	14.28 (2.86)	2.64	.66
Motivation to teach (Items: 18, 24, 27, 29, 35)	5	16.25 (3.25)	1.99	.62
Emotional factors (Items: 21, 23R, 31R, 32R, 34R)	5	14.67 (2.93)	2.62	.77

*Note.* The scale preservice preparation only had four items because Item 22 was discarded.  
R = recoded item because of negative wording. See Appendix A for the content of items.

*Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the New Predictor Variables*

*(Domains) Following the Principal Components Analysis*

Scale	N (Items)	M Scale mean (Item mean)	Scale SD	Alpha
Emotional factors (Items: 23R, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31R, 32R, 34R)	8	26.09 (3.26)	3.65	.84
School and community Support (Items: 6, 8, 12, 20, 33)	5	14.14 (2.83)	2.25	.70
Instructional support (Items: 5, 11, 30)	3	8.40 (2.80)	1.94	.63
Preparation in teaching curriculum, managing students, and assessing students (Items: 16, 19, 28R)	3	7.69 (2.56)	1.83	.55
Collaboration (Items: 17, 26)	2	5.72 (2.86)	1.32	.53
Compensation and Benefits (Items: 1, 4, 7)	3	6.86 (2.29)	1.68	.55
Motivation to teach (Item: 35)	1	-	-	-
Culture shock (Items: 2R, 3R, 15R)	3	2.69 (.808)	1.65	.46

*Note.* R = recoded item because of negative wording. See Appendix A for the content of items.

## APPENDIX C

### STAY OR LEAVE? FACTORS INFLUENCING THE RETENTION OF ED TEACHERS IN SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA SURVEY

*Enhanced Survey from the original instrument developed by Karen Giacometti and is in Giacometti, K. S. (2005). Factors affecting Satisfaction and Retention of Beginning Teachers. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.*

The original version of this instrument was developed by Karen Giacometti and is in Giacometti, K.S. (2005). Factors Affecting Job Satisfaction and Teacher Retention for Beginning Teachers. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA. Used with permission of the author.



**Stay or Leave? Factors Influencing the Retention of Teachers for the Emotionally-Disturbed in Southwestern Virginia**

**Instructions: Please read each question carefully and circle your response.**

**( SA ) = Strongly Agree, ( A ) = Agree, ( D ) = Disagree, ( SD ) = Strongly Disagree**

1. My school has a positive environment in which to teach SA A D SD
2. My principal is supportive when ED teachers experience difficulty with their student caseloads SA A D SD
3. I feel overwhelmed with the amount of paperwork I have to complete on a daily basis SA A D SD
4. My principal is available to help me with crisis situations SA A D SD
5. I am given adequate notice of new school-wide classroom procedures SA A D SD
6. Part of my undergraduate program of studies included “handling conflicts” SA A D SD
7. My additional school-related responsibilities have decreased since being employed in my current teaching position SA A D SD
8. I feel I have positive relationships with other teachers in my school building SA A D SD
9. My salary is comparable to ED teachers in other school divisions SA A D SD
10. Training in alternative intervention strategies is offered to teachers of the emotionally-disturbed SA A D SD

**Instructions: Please read each question carefully and circle your response.**

**( SA ) = Strongly Agree, ( A ) = Agree, ( D ) = Disagree, ( SD ) = Strongly Disagree**

- |  |    |   |   |    |
|--|----|---|---|----|
| 11. My principal is not invested in the student intervention continuum   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 12. I have the appropriate endorsement to instruct students with emotional disturbances  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 13. I am overwhelmed with additional out-of-classroom responsibilities   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 14. I feel I am prepared for the emotional difficulties of teaching ED students  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 15. The school district's instructional content specialists are easily accessible  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 16. My job is too frustrating  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 17. The Virginia Retirement System provides an adequate retirement package   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 18. There is not an adequate supply of social skills materials in my school district for teachers of the emotionally-disturbed | SA | A | D | SD |
| 19. My salary is adequate  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 20. My responsibilities are consistent with my job description   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 21. My college coursework prepared me to teach my assigned courses   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 22. My college coursework prepared me for ED students to utilize community resources   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 23. I have the opportunity to attend local but not state in-service trainings in my field                                      | SA | A | D | SD |
| 24. The job-related stress does not reduce my confidence   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 25. The salary increases provided annually are adequate  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 26. My students' parents support my schools' discipline procedures   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 27. My principal appreciates the efforts of ED teachers  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 28. My principal has not clarified my job expectations   | SA | A | D | SD |

**Instructions: Please read each question carefully and circle your response.**

**( SA ) = Strongly Agree, ( A ) = Agree, ( D ) = Disagree, ( SD ) = Strongly Disagree**

29. A single semester of student teaching is inadequate for preparation of teachers for the emotionally-disturbed SA A D SD
30. I am provided in-service training in instructional strategies for the emotionally disturbed SA A D SD
31. The behavior management training that my district offers is not helpful to teachers of the emotionally-disturbed SA A D SD
32. My school has very little incidents of violence involving ED students against teachers or other students SA A D SD
33. My school district provides financial incentives for additional academic degrees SA A D SD
34. Maintaining daily classroom discipline is difficult SA A D SD
35. My principal does not support the schools' discipline procedures SA A D SD
36. I understand what is expected of me as an instructor of ED students SA A D SD
37. My undergraduate coursework did not contain "classroom behavior management techniques" SA A D SD
38. I observe and seek advice from other teachers of students with emotional disturbances SA A D SD
39. The parents or guardians of my students rarely return my calls. SA A D SD
40. I feel overwhelmed by the number of meetings I am required to facilitate or attend SA A D SD
41. Teachers of the emotionally-disturbed receive additional financial stipends. SA A D SD
42. My school district's referral process of identifying students exhibiting at-risk behavior is adequate SA A D SD
43. My principal provides me with helpful suggestions to improve my teaching skills SA A D SD
44. I have a positive working partnership with the general education teachers SA A D SD

**Instructions: Please read each question carefully and circle your response.**

**( SA ) = Strongly Agree, ( A ) = Agree, ( D ) = Disagree, ( SD ) = Strongly Disagree**

- |  |    |   |   |    |
|--|----|---|---|----|
| 45. Cultural awareness was addressed in very few of my college courses   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 46. My district stresses professional development as a way of increasing the skill level of ED teachers                  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 47. Teaching emotionally disturbed students is stressful   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 48. I regularly complete school-related work at home due to time constraints at school                                   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 49. I have an opportunity to be employed during the summer   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 50. The general education teachers in my school are supportive of emotionally disturbed students                         | SA | A | D | SD |
| 51. My principal encourages creativity with handling difficult issues involving students with emotional disturbances     | SA | A | D | SD |
| 52. I am provided a copy of my schools' disciplinary procedures  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 53. Both my undergraduate and graduate coursework did not adequately prepare me to assess emotionally-disturbed students | SA | A | D | SD |
| 54. I help formulate the instructional objectives for the school's annual plan   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 55. I have anxiety attacks when I think of going to work   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 56. My daily responsibilities are comparable to other ED teachers in other localities                                    | SA | A | D | SD |
| 57. My healthcare benefits are adequate  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 58. Adequate administrative support is provided to teachers of emotionally disturbed students                            | SA | A | D | SD |
| 59. My current caseload is too difficult to manage   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 60. I am not offered adequate administrative training procedures   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 61. The daily interaction with emotionally-disturbed students is frustrating   | SA | A | D | SD |

**Instructions: Please read each question carefully and circle your response.**

( SA ) = Strongly Agree, ( A ) = Agree, ( D ) = Disagree, ( SD ) = Strongly Disagree

- |  |    |   |   |    |
|--|----|---|---|----|
| 62. Professional development has made me a more effective teacher of the emotionally-disturbed | SA | A | D | SD |
| 63. I feel burned out by the end of the first semester of each school year                     | SA | A | D | SD |
| 64. Working with ED students give me a sense of self-satisfaction                              | SA | A | D | SD |

**Demographic Information**

**Instructions: Please read each question carefully and fill in your response.**

65. I plan to stay in my current assignment: Yes      No
66. If you plan to stay in your current assignment, rank the reason in order of importance ( 1- 5 ) for your reason to stay. Use line number 6 (other) if your reason is not listed.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Will be retiring soon
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Compensation is adequate.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Enjoy teaching students with emotional disturbances
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Proximity of school
5. \_\_\_\_\_ School environment/personnel
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Other: please explain

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67. \_\_\_\_ I plan to leave my current assignment
68. If you plan to leave your current assignment, rank the reasons in order of importance (1- 6) for your reason to leave. Use line number 6 (other ) if your reason is not listed.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Workload is too overwhelming
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Compensation is inadequate.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Student misbehavior
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Leaving ED assignment for another special education assignment, other than ED.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Leaving ED assignment for a regular education assignment
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Other: please explain

---

---

**Instructions: Please read each question carefully and fill in your response.**

69. If leaving your current position as an ED teacher, please indicate when you plan to leave. If not leaving, please indicate on line 5.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ At the end of the current school year ( 08-09 )
2. \_\_\_\_\_ ( 09 – 10 )
3. \_\_\_\_\_ ( 10 – 11 )
4. \_\_\_\_\_ If more than 3 years, indicate how many years \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't plan on leaving

70. Age at last birthday

- \_\_\_\_\_ 20 – 30 years
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31 – 40 years
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41 – 50 years
- \_\_\_\_\_ 51 – 60 years
- \_\_\_\_\_ 61 – 70 years

71. Race:

- \_\_\_\_\_ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asian of Pacific Islander
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black, not of Hispanic origin
- \_\_\_\_\_ White, not of Hispanic origin

72. Gender:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Male
- \_\_\_\_\_ Female

73. Educational level:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's
- \_\_\_\_\_ Master's
- \_\_\_\_\_ Educational Specialist
- \_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate

74. Years teaching in special education:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 – 3 years
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3 – 5 years
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5 – 7 years
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7 – or more

**Instructions: Please read each question carefully and fill in your response.**

75. Years teaching Emotionally Disturbed students:

- 1 – 3 years
- 3 – 5 years
- 5 – 7 years
- 7 – or more

76. Indicate current instructional grade level assignment

- Elementary
- Middle school
- High school

77. Indicate number of teaching years in prior educational assignment setting

- full inclusion
- collaborative
- self-contained

78. Indicate current educational assignment setting

- full inclusion
- collaborative
- self-contained

79. My current salary is:

- \$30,000 – \$40,000
- \$40,001 – \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$60,000
- Over \$60,000

APPENDIX D  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

**Office of Research Compliance**

1880 Pratt Drive (0497)  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
540/231-4358 Fax: 540/231-0959  
E-mail: [ctgreen@vt.edu](mailto:ctgreen@vt.edu)  
[www.irb.vt.edu](http://www.irb.vt.edu)  
FWA00000572( expires 1/20/2010)  
IRB # is IRB00000667

DATE: November 10, 2008

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Theodore Creighton  
Anthony Walker

FROM: Carmen Green

**IRB Exempt Approval:** “Stay or Leave? Factors Influencing the Retention of ED Teachers in Southwestern Virginia”, IRB # 08-683

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. The research falls within the exempt status. Approval is granted effective as of November 10, 2008.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in the research protocol. The proposed change must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

cc: File

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND STATE UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX E  
PERMISSION LETTER TO SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

Anthony M. Walker  
Doctoral Candidate  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Dear Division Superintendent:

I am writing to request your assistance and permission in collecting information for my doctoral dissertation. My study is entitled, *Stay or Leave? Factors Influencing the Retention of ED teachers in Southwestern Virginia*. As you are aware, there is a nationwide shortage of ED teachers to instruct students with emotional disturbances. The Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) call for all school districts to employ highly qualified personnel and holds the district accountable for the quality of student achievement for all students. It is no question that many school divisions are finding it difficult to obtain and maintain qualified ED teachers in their workforce, and they are being creative to help meet the demand. Previous research states that understanding why teachers leave is the first step in getting them to stay (Ingersoll, 2001). Also, ED teachers leave when they encounter environments that lack support from school leadership, organizational structuring, feeling valued, and professional development that includes strong induction and mentoring programs for new and experienced teachers. As part of my dissertation at Virginia Tech, I am studying the specific factors that influence an ED teacher's decision to stay or leave their current assignment for other educational or out-of-field opportunities.

Enclosed is a survey that has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for your review. The time frame to complete the survey should take no more than a maximum of 30 minutes. Also, in order not to interfere with instructional time, participants may take the survey home to complete. All surveys and their results will be kept confidential, including any identifiable information pertaining to the school district. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Teachers will be provided a copy of the Informed Consent Form to read and review prior to completing the survey. The Informed Consent document is enclosed for your review. Teachers will not receive monetary compensation for participating in this survey.

Once the study is completed I will provide your school district with a summarized report of the analyzed data. It is my desire to distribute the surveys by mid-November and have data collection completed by late December.

As previously stated, I need your permission to survey your teachers. You can email me at [anwalke3@vt.edu](mailto:anwalke3@vt.edu) granting me permission or return the permission slip enclosed in this packet. In addition, I can also be contacted at (540) 345-2475 or (540) 589-3536. Dr. Creighton, my dissertation chairperson, can be contacted at (540) 231-4546 should you require further verification or have questions.

I want to take this time to thank you in advance for consideration to my request. The participation of your special education teachers is invaluable to the success of this research study.

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Anthony M. Walker  
Doctoral Candidate

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Dr. Theodore Creighton  
Dissertation Committee Chair

## APPENDIX F

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR STUDY

#### VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

##### **Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects**

**Title of Project:** Stay or Leave? Factors Influencing the Retention of ED Teachers in Southwestern Virginia

**Investigators:** Anthony M. Walker, Doctoral Candidate  
Dr. Theodore Creighton, Dissertation Chair Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program Leader

#### **I. Purpose of this Research/Project**

The purpose of the research study is to investigate the factors contributing to the reduced retention and high turnover rate of special education teachers of students with emotional disturbances. This study will test the hypothesis that ED teachers leave their teaching assignments for other education or out-of-field opportunities. This reduced retention is due to variables, such as pre-service teacher preparation, staff development, stress and burnout, compensation, student discipline, role conflict, and administrative support. ED teachers who experience positive levels of support experience long tenures in their teaching positions.

Participants for this study will involve approximately 200 ED teachers who are employed full time in regions 6 & 7 in southwestern Virginia. Participants who have student(s) on their caseload who are determined to have an emotional disability will be given an individual survey packet to complete at their leisure.

#### **II. Procedures**

The first point of communication will be the division Superintendent. A supporting letter requesting permission to conduct this study will be sent by email, as well as a hardcopy mailed through US Postal Service to each Superintendent in school districts of Region 6 and 7 in Southwest Virginia. The letter will outline the nature of the study, its' purpose, include a formal copy of the survey, and a copy of the Informed Consent Form. The Informed Consent Form will be given to each special education teacher participating with the study.

Once the superintendent gives permission for submission of the survey and data collection from school personnel, each principal will be contacted and issued a survey packet that will include a formal letter explaining the study, an Informed Consent Form, and a coded survey. The principal will be directed to give each ED teacher a coded survey and consent form. In addition to the consent form, the principal will explain to each teacher that this is a voluntary study and that their identity will be protected. The participants will be provided a postage paid and self-addressed envelope that they are to return with the completed survey and consent form.

Teachers may take the surveys home to complete as an option so as not to interfere with instructional time. The time required to complete the survey should be a maximum of 30 minutes, so if teachers choose to complete surveys during planning time, instructional time will not be compromised.

The survey is formatted and is structured to obtain data through specific questions. Questions 1 through 64 contains items relating to the participants perceptions of job satisfaction of their current assignment, as well as their intent to stay or leave the field of special education for other opportunities. Questions 65 through 79 target information about the participants background and current job assignment. The survey also requires the participant to express their perceptions of job satisfaction by circling options that range from SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, to SD = Strongly Disagree.

Data collected from respondents will be analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Frequency distribution, mean scores, and standard deviations will be calculated as part of this analysis. Selected data will be disaggregated by supporting variables, such as gender, age, years of experience in special education, and years of experience instructing students with emotional disturbances.

### **III. Risks**

Risks for subjects participating in this study should be minimal. However, several questions in this survey ask participants to rate their level of agreement or disagreement to various leadership behaviors, satisfaction with their job and whether they intend to leave their current teaching position. Subjects may feel answering these questions may pose the risk of their supervisor or colleagues knowing their feelings or intent, which may create some emotional discomfort.

This potential risk is safeguarded by ensuring the anonymity of the subjects. Participants will be provided a pre-addressed, postage paid envelope in which they can return the completed surveys directly to the researcher rather than returning completed surveys through supervisors. This method of return will assure the participants their supervisors and colleagues will not have access to their survey responses. Participants will be informed that their participation in this study is completely voluntary and their anonymity will be protected. No participant will be asked to provide any identifying information. Individual participant information or their survey responses will not be discussed or reported in any research results or reports.

### **IV. Benefits**

There is no specific level or degree of benefits included for your participating with this study. However, one may experience more understanding of the different variables that influence the retention of ED teachers. School leaders can utilize data from this study to enhance their staff development and hiring practices to help attract and maintain qualified ED teachers within the school divisions' workforce.

ED teachers enter the teaching profession with the distinct goal of making a difference in the lives of students with special needs, as well as fulfilling their own goals and self-worth. But due to the powerful effects of stress and emotional strain from both internal and external factors, they often are forced to abandon their chosen profession. In addition, the special education profession is in the age of accountability as school districts have to comply with both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and No Child Left Behind. Also, they are compelled to comply with the often more rigorous requirements of the individualized state mandates. As the crisis of retention of teachers of emotional disturbance continues, school districts will find it increasingly difficult to provide the necessary quality in a continuum of services, leaving the field of special education with lost momentum in providing the necessary experience, structure, and support for teachers who instruct students with emotional disturbances.

This study includes previous research that yielded substantial information regarding why special education teachers leave the field. Most factors were cross-categorically identified as having some affect or retention in all areas of special education. However, there were very few studies that focused on the

critical area of special education teachers who instruct student with emotional disturbances regarding the specific reasons why they leave the profession.

This study will add to previous research as it has an individual focus on ED teachers instructing students with emotional disturbances, their view of job satisfaction, and individual experiences with retention.

( ) Please check here if you desire a summarized version of the results of this study.

**V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality**

All participants will be guaranteed confidentiality at all levels during the process of this study. There will be no identifying factors of participants within the survey, supporting letters, as well as in the final report. However, the researcher will code individual surveys received with an identifiable letter or number to track responses. At no time will the researcher release results of this study to anyone other than those working with the researcher without written consent. Also, it is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may request to review all or any part of the results of this study. Following the completion of this study, all data collected will be maintained in a secure location for at least 3 years. After the third year, all data from this study will be destroyed by shredding all individual surveys and supporting documents.

**VI. Compensation**

This study does not include or require monetary compensation for participants.

**VII. Freedom to Withdraw**

Any participant is free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. Also, participants are free to abstain from answering any form of question or leave comments without being penalized.

**VIII. Subject's Responsibilities**

My participation with this study is on a voluntary basis. I am responsible for completing the written survey, placing the survey in the enclosed pre-addressed postage-paid envelope, and mailing the envelope to the researcher.

**IX. Subject's Permission**

I have read the Informed Consent Form and agree to all conditions of this study. All of my questions have been addressed regarding my individual participation. I acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject Signature

**Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:**

**Anthony M. Walker, Investigator (540) 345-2475**

**Dr. Theodore Creighton, Dissertation Chair (540) 231-4546**

**Dr. Lewis Wasserman, Faculty Advisor (540) 231-9707**

**David M. Moore**  
**Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review**  
**Board for the Protection of Human Subjects**  
**Office of Research Compliance**  
**2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)**  
**Blacksburg, VA 24061**

**(540) [231-4991](tel:5402314991)/[moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)**  
**Telephone/e-mail**

APPENDIX G  
LETTER TO SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Anthony M. Walker, Doctoral Candidate  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Dear Special Educator:

I am writing to request your assistance and permission in collecting information for my doctoral dissertation. My study is entitled, *Stay or Leave? Factors Influencing the Retention of ED teachers in Southwestern Virginia*. As you are aware, there is a nationwide shortage of ED teachers to instruct students with emotional disturbances. The Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) call for all school districts to employ highly qualified personnel and holds the district accountable for the quality of student achievement for all students. It is no question that many school divisions are finding it difficult to obtain and maintain qualified ED teachers in their workforce, and they are being creative to help meet the demand. Previous research states that understanding why teachers leave is the first step in getting them to stay (Ingersoll, 2001). Also, ED teachers leave when they encounter environments that lack support from school leadership, organizational structuring, feeling valued, and professional development that includes strong induction and mentoring programs for new and experienced teachers. As part of my dissertation at Virginia Tech, I am studying the specific factors that influence an ED teacher's decision to stay or leave their current assignment for other educational or out-of-field opportunities.

I understand that this is a busy time of the school year for all teachers and the responsibilities that you endure demands a large portion of your time. However, it is only those ED teachers who are specifically employed in public schools who can provide a vivid picture of the reality of working with emotionally disturbed students on a daily basis. Please take a moment to read and sign the enclosed Informed Consent and complete the enclosed survey. Any information you provide will be kept confidential at the highest level. In addition, neither personal information regarding participants nor information regarding the school district's identity will be mentioned in the study.

After completing the survey, please return the survey and signed Informed Consent in the postage paid, pre-addressed envelope. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there will be no monetary compensation for your participation in this study.

Should you have questions feel free to email me at ([anwalke3@vt.edu](mailto:anwalke3@vt.edu)). I can also be contacted at (540)345-2475 or (540) 389-3536. Dr. Creighton, my dissertation chairperson, can be contacted at (540) 231-4546 should you require further verification or have questions.

I want to take this time to thank you in advance for taking time to participate in my study. Your responses are invaluable to the success of this research project.

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Anthony M. Walker  
Doctoral Candidate

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Dr. Theodore Creighton  
Dissertation Committee Chair