

**FACTORS INFLUENCING URBAN SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS'  
COMMITMENT, JOB SATISFACTION, AND CAREER PLANS**

by

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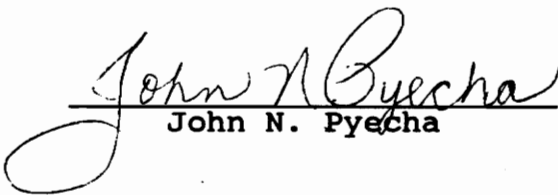
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**Factors Influencing Urban Special Education Teachers'  
Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Career Plans**

by

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(Abstract)

High teacher attrition rates coupled with critical personnel shortages in special education have augmented the need for research in teacher attrition/retention. Retaining quality personnel in special education teaching is vital to assuring that students with disabilities receive an appropriate education. The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth exploration of factors influencing urban special education teachers' career plans.

To gain a better understanding of urban special educators' commitment, job satisfaction, and career plans, qualitative research methods were employed throughout this study's data collection and analysis procedures. Based on the results of a screening instrument from another study, sixty special education teachers in the Memphis City Schools (MCS) were selected to participate in this study. These teachers were divided equally into three groups of special educators (i.e., stayers, leavers, undecideds) with specific career plans and attitudes (e.g., commitment, job

satisfaction). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the special educators using an interview guide. Cross-interview analyses were used to analyze the interviewees' responses to each of the questions on the interview guide. Patterns and themes that emerged from the data were identified and discussed. Specific teacher examples and verbatim quotes were also included to illustrate the study's findings.

According to interviewees, various job-related factors (e.g., support, work assignment, student factors, work rewards) were most important to their commitment, job satisfaction, and plans to remain in and leave special education teaching in MCS. Support was more often mentioned as a reason for wanting to stay than any other factor. Reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS clustered around two major factors, work assignment and support.

These findings suggest that special attention to job-related factors may be particularly important to prevent attrition among these at-risk teachers. By listening to interviewees' recommendations for improving work conditions in MCS and including these teachers in the decision making process, school administrators may positively affect teachers' career plans and better retain their special education teaching force.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The question is no longer why Johnny can't read but why Johnny's teacher won't teach (McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Swanson-Owens, & Yee, 1986). Teacher attrition is a growing concern among educators across the United States. Retaining quality personnel in teaching is vital to establishing and maintaining effective educational programs for all students. The ability of the teaching profession to elicit higher levels of commitment and involvement from its educators will contribute significantly to reducing the high attrition rates in teaching.

#### **Background of the Problem**

Both general and special education have been experiencing personnel shortages. For example, a report issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (1990) revealed that in 1988 over 5,300 personnel did not return to their teaching positions resulting in teacher shortages throughout the state of Georgia. Georgia schools need to recruit nearly 20 teachers a day to meet the current levels of demand. In a study for the National Center for Education Statistics, Plisko and Stern (1985) suggested that by 1992 the incoming supply of new teacher graduates will

only meet 63.7% of the demand nationwide for general education teachers.

Severe personnel shortages are also being reported in special education. According to the Fourteenth Annual Report of Congress (1992), an additional 26,310 special education teachers were needed during 1989-90 to fill teaching vacancies and replace uncertified staff in the United States. A study by Smith-Davis, Burke, and Noel (1984) indicated that some states have as many as 100 unfilled special education teaching positions long after the school year has begun.

There are several reasons for the teacher shortages in special education. They include: a) increases in the number of children who are identified as disabled (National Center for Education Statistics, 1990); b) a decline in the number of college degrees awarded in special education (Frankel & Stowe, 1990; Lauritzen & Friedman, 1991; National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, 1988); c) changes in the demographic composition of the teaching force (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Murname, Singer, & Willett, 1989); and d) attrition from teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987).

Even though all of these factors contribute to the teacher shortage problem in special education, the major contributor is "...the large numbers of special education

professionals who, annually, leave the profession..."

(Report to Congress, "A Free Appropriate Education: But Who Will Provide It?, 1989, p. 2). Attrition rates among special educators nationwide have been reported at 7.3% (Boe, 1991a). However, studies of attrition in individual states have reported even higher attrition rates for special education teachers (Cross, 1987; Metzke, 1988). For example, Cross (1987) reported a 13.2% attrition rate for special education teachers in Virginia. Attrition among special educators is expected to continue to increase as "the demand for new teachers rises and an increasing proportion of teachers reach retirement" (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987, p. 3).

Attrition among special educators in urban settings is markedly high (McKnab, 1989; Metzke, 1988) with urban school districts experiencing higher attrition rates than rural districts (Heynes, 1988; McKnab, 1989). Findings from a comprehensive study conducted by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) paint a "bleak picture of the conditions of urban teaching" (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988, p. 127). Corcoran, Walker, and White (1988) found that teachers in urban schools face some of the most difficult working conditions. Lack of resources, low staff collegiality, poor professional development, and poor leadership have resulted in higher absenteeism and reduced

job satisfaction among urban teachers (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988).

Research studies have associated a number of variables with special education teacher attrition. For example, excessive paperwork (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990), lack of support (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; McKnab, 1983; Metzke, 1988; Platt & Olson, 1990), and student-related factors (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Metzke, 1988) have been cited by special educators as reasons for leaving teaching.

Variables which influence teacher attrition and retention have also been linked to commitment and job satisfaction. Chapman and Green (1986) suggest that the roots of attrition can be traced back to the differences in teachers' commitment to teaching. Teachers who have taught continuously have higher initial commitment to teaching than those who have left teaching or those who have been prepared to teach but have never actually taught (Chapman & Green, 1986).

Commitment to teaching is also a strong predictor of teachers' intentions to remain in or leave teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Grady, 1989) and actual turnover behaviors (Grady, 1989). As teachers' commitment increases, their intent to leave teaching decreases (Grady, 1989).

Billingsley and Cross (1992) found that attitudinal and behavioral measures of commitment were significant predictors of teachers' intent to stay in teaching.

Job satisfaction has been associated with teacher attrition, retention, and commitment. Rosenholtz (1989a) explains this relationship by describing teachers' commitment as "the extent of their work investment, performance quality, satisfaction, attendance, and desire to remain in the profession" (p. 422). Research reveals that the extent of workplace dissatisfaction and burnout can be used successfully to account for teacher attrition (Rosenholtz, 1989a). Teachers with higher levels of job satisfaction are more likely to remain in teaching than teachers experiencing low satisfaction with their jobs (Heyns, 1988; Louis Harris & Associates, 1985; Sweeney, Warren, & Kemis, 1991).

Dissatisfaction among teachers has been associated with higher levels of stress, teacher absenteeism, illness, and turnover (Culver, Wolfle, & Cross, 1990). In a study of elementary school teachers, Rosenholtz (1989b) not only found job dissatisfaction to be a major source of teacher absenteeism, but also of ineffectiveness in helping students achieve academically and low work investment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Reducing attrition and increasing commitment and job satisfaction are vital to maintaining quality special education personnel in the workforce. However, limited information is available for guiding policy makers and administrators in designing effective programs for retaining special education teachers. Previous research studies have primarily focussed on job satisfaction and burnout among special education teachers. Few studies have explored **why** special educators **leave** their special education teaching positions. Furthermore, no published studies have specifically examined factors affecting special education teacher attrition and retention in urban settings even though teachers are leaving urban schools at an increasingly high rate (LeCompte and Dworkin, 1991).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is part of a larger three-year project which examines in-depth issues surrounding urban special education teaching. The purpose of this particular study is to gain a better understanding of special education teacher intent to leave, commitment, and job satisfaction in the Memphis City Schools (MCS). Findings obtained in this study will be used as part of the three-year project to assist in developing a five-year strategic plan for increasing the retention of MCS special education teachers.

In this study, factors influencing special educators' career plans (i.e., intentions to remain in or leave special education teaching in the MCS) are used as an indicator of teachers' reasons for remaining in or leaving special education teaching in the MCS. Examining the career plans of MCS special educators and the factors affecting these career plans will provide valuable insights into MCS special education teacher attrition/retention. Factors influencing teachers' career plans, commitment, and job satisfaction are examined in the following three distinct groups of MCS special educators: 1) committed and satisfied special education teachers who intend to remain as special education teachers in the MCS; 2) special educators who are dissatisfied, not committed, and plan to leave special education teaching in the MCS; 3) special education teachers who are both satisfied and dissatisfied with various aspects of their jobs and are undecided about their career plans.

Information was gathered through 60 face-to-face interviews with MCS special education teachers. These in-depth interviews assisted the researcher in gaining new insights into factors which influence special education teachers' career plans. Identifying the events, problems, experiences, and perceptions that influence special educators' job satisfaction and commitment to special



education teaching provided a better understanding of special educators' career attitudes and plans.

### **Research Questions to be Investigated**

The research questions investigated in this study are (Research Triangle Institute, 1991):

1. What influences the differing career plans of special education teachers in MCS?
2. What influences teachers' commitment to and desire to remain in or leave special education teaching in MCS?
3. What influences job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction among teachers who intend to remain in or leave special education teaching in MCS?
4. What are the situational differences between teachers who intend to remain in special education in the MCS and teachers who plan to leave special education in the MCS?

### **Importance of the Study**

As previously discussed, the field of special education is experiencing severe personnel shortages (Boe, 1991b; Smith-Davis, Burke, & Noel, 1984; Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress, 1991). Undesirable consequences have already resulted from these personnel shortages. First of all, less qualified teachers are being hired to fill vacant teaching positions (Boe, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1984). As older teachers retire (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Murname, Singer, & Willett, 1989) and younger teachers leave to pursue other career opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 1984), the current academically-able and experienced teaching force is dwindling. To combat this problem, school

districts have been forced to hire unqualified and uncertified personnel. For example, Schrag (1990) estimated that up to 30% of special education personnel are currently on emergency certification.

Secondly, employing uncertified personnel has an immediate effect on the quality of educational programs (Darling-Hammond, 1984). Uncertified teachers have little or no training and experience in special education teaching. Appropriate educational programs for students with disabilities will only be available if there are qualified special educators to teach them (Research Triangle Institute, 1991).

Finally, shortages of special education teachers may cause school districts to reduce services to disabled students or increase teachers' caseloads (Research Triangle Institute, 1991). This can result in stressful and unsatisfactory working conditions for special educators thus contributing to the teacher attrition problem (Research Triangle Institute, 1991).

Boe (1990) suggests that "retaining qualified professionals in the classroom is the most promising approach to minimizing teacher shortage" (p. 17). Even though attrition is the major contributor to the teacher shortage problem (Boe, 1990; Report to Congress, 1989), few studies have explored teacher attrition/retention in special

education. Furthermore, no published studies were found regarding special education teacher attrition and retention in urban settings, although attrition is high for teachers in urban settings (McKnab, 1989; Metzke, 1988). This study provides an in-depth examination of the factors which affect teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction in special education. Because of the high teacher attrition rates and the critical personnel shortages in special education, research is needed that enhances teacher retention, especially in urban settings. This study's contribution to increasing our knowledge of issues surrounding special education teacher attrition/retention is vital to retaining a committed and satisfied workforce.

#### **Outline of the Remainder of the Dissertation**

This chapter provided background information concerning the problem of teacher attrition/retention among special educators and described the importance and purpose of this study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature regarding teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. Variables which influence teachers' career decisions are identified and discussed for both general and special educators.

In Chapter 3 of the dissertation, the methodology employed during the study is presented. Procedures for selecting the study's setting, selecting the study's

population and sample, and collecting and analyzing the data are identified and discussed.

The findings of the study are reported in Chapter 4. Information is provided to assist in answering the research questions that were established at the beginning of the study. Excerpts from teacher interviews are included to support the research findings.

Chapter 5 of the dissertation provides a summary and discussion of the study's findings. Recommendations for the implementation of the findings and implications for school administrators are stated.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to examine relevant research studies pertaining to attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction in fields other than teaching and in general and special education teaching. To accomplish this task, the literature review is divided into the four sections. Section 1 is a brief review of employee attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction in fields other than teaching. A review of literature pertaining to attrition rates and factors influencing attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction in general and special education teaching is presented in Section 2. Section 3 discusses the need for further research on employee attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction in special education as determined by the analysis of prior research studies. A summary of the chapter is contained in Section 4.

Although some reports and monographs synthesizing information on teacher attrition and retention do exist (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1984), only studies from 1980-1991 that employ empirical research techniques are included in

this literature review.<sup>1</sup> To identify these studies, thorough searches of the ERIC and PsycLIT databases have been conducted using the following descriptors: attrition, retention, commitment, career change, labor turnover, job satisfaction, elementary school teachers, secondary school teachers, special education teachers, and specific disability areas (e.g., learning disabilities).

#### **Employee Attrition/Retention, Commitment, and Job Satisfaction in Fields Other Than Teaching**

Industrial, business, and human service organizations nationwide have experienced high attrition and turnover rates among their employees. A study of retail salespersons conducted by Hollenbeck and Williams (1986) revealed an employee turnover rate of 13.4%. Attrition and turnover rates as high as 30% have been noted in some retail industries and businesses (Cohen & Schwartz, 1980). Other businesses recording high employee attrition rates are law firms and engineering corporations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1988).

The field of nursing contains some of the highest attrition rates found in human service organizations. Annual attrition and turnover rates ranging from 6.4% to 21.1% have been identified in various studies of hospital

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<sup>1</sup>Because of the different societal beliefs and economic conditions existing at that time, the few attrition studies that were conducted during the 1960's and 1970's are not included in this literature review. For the purpose of this research study, inclusion of findings from these earlier studies would not provide relevant information to facilitate our understanding of the issues surrounding the present day problem of teacher attrition in special education.

nursing staff (Griffeth & Hom, 1988; Sheridan & Abelson, 1983; Spencer, 1986). Sheridan (1985) found that over half of newly hired nursing home staff leave within six months of their employment.

Other human service organizations experiencing difficulties in retaining employees are community care providers. For example, a study of policemen by DeLey (1984) revealed a mean turnover rate of 5.55% for policemen in large cities and a 10.24% mean turnover rate for policemen in small cities. When interviewing program workers for the aging, Roberts and Sarvela (1989) found that approximately 10% of them intended to quit their jobs within the next 12 months.

There are several factors which have influenced these high rates of employee turnover and attrition in industrial, business, and home health care organizations. Lack of interaction with administrators (Spencer, 1986) and low salaries (Roberts & Sarvela, 1989) have been cited by employees as reasons for leaving their job positions. Employee attitudes such as stress and frustration have also been related to turnover and attrition (DeLey, 1984; Roberts & Sarvela, 1989).

Intention to quit appears to be the most significant predictor of employee turnover and attrition among community care providers (Griffeth & Hom, 1988; Roberts & Sarvela,

1989). Those employees intending to quit their jobs had higher educational backgrounds, were more dissatisfied with their jobs, and did not feel adequately prepared for their jobs (Roberts & Sarvela, 1989).

Previous research studies in business, industry, and human service organizations have linked employee attrition to both commitment and job satisfaction. In business and organizational studies, commitment has received a great deal of attention. Two types of organizational commitment that have been discussed in the academic literature are behavioral commitment and attitudinal commitment (Reyes, Madsen, & Taylor, 1989). Behavioral commitment is the "intent to behave in some way such as continuing to be an employee of the organization" (cited in Reyes, Madsen, & Taylor, 1989, p. 6). Attitudinal commitment, on the other hand, refers to the "acceptance of the organization's values, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and the desire to remain an employee of the organization" (cited in Reyes, Madsen, & Taylor, 1989, p. 6).

Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) found that committed employees are more likely to remain with the organization and work toward organizational goals. However, when employee commitment is low, intention to quit is more likely (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Research studies indicate



that organizational commitment is negatively related to employee turnover and absenteeism (Angle & Perry, 1981).

A number of variables have been identified by researchers as affecting employees' job commitment. Personal characteristics such as age and extent of education have been related to employee commitment (Morris & Sherman, 1981). Role conflict, opportunities for advancement (Morris & Sherman, 1981), and job involvement (Randall & Cote, 1991) are work-related factors that can influence employees' organizational commitment.

Job satisfaction, like commitment, has been associated with attrition/retention among employees in business, industry, and other organizational structures. In the organizational literature, studies of job satisfaction have traditionally emphasized two broad approaches (Neil & Snizek, 1988): the examination of personal or demographic characteristics which affect job satisfaction and organizational factors affecting job satisfaction. Personal factors that have been studied in relationship to employee job satisfaction include gender, age, experience, and seniority (Neil & Snizek, 1988). Workers' perceived degrees of bureaucratization, positions in the organizational hierarchy, and the nature of work tasks are examples of organizational factors that may be associated with employee job satisfaction (Neil & Snizek, 1988). A consistent

relationship between job satisfaction and the propensity to remain with the organization has generally been found across occupational groups (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). However, job satisfaction is not an indicator of employee turnover in some studies (Griffeth & Hom, 1984; Sheridan & Abelson, 1983).

### **Employee Attrition/Retention, Commitment, and Job Satisfaction in General and Special Education Teaching**

In comparison to other professions, teaching maintains one of the highest annual attrition rates nationwide (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1988). The ability to retain quality teachers has become a growing concern throughout the United States. Attrition rates for general education teachers have been reported as high as 8.3% (Metzke, 1988); however, various subject area teacher attrition rates (e.g., science teachers, English teachers) are considerably higher (Berry, 1985; Murname, Singer, & Willett, 1989). Some research indicates that as few as 18% of general educators still in teaching were confident that they would remain in teaching (Cohen, Klink, & Grana, 1990).

Relatively few studies exist which examine teacher attrition/retention in special education as compared to general education. However, those special education studies that do exist indicate that attrition rates for special educators are considerably higher than those for general educators (McKnab, 1989; Metzke, 1988; Singer, in press;

Smith, 1981). For example, during the 1987-88 school year, the attrition rate for Wisconsin special education teachers was 13.7% as compared to a 5.8% attrition rate for Wisconsin general education teachers (Metzke, 1988). In Kansas, local attrition rates for special educators have been reported as high as 20% (McKnab, 1983). Over 2/3 of state CSPD (Comprehensive System of Personnel Development) representatives have indicated special education teacher attrition as a significant problem in their state (Schofer & Duncan, 1986).

A great number of teachers who leave special education teaching positions seek employment in general education (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; McKnab, 1983; Platt and Olson, 1990). Platt and Olson (1990) found that out of 76 special educators surveyed who had previously left the special education classroom 43% of them were holding general education teaching jobs. Many special education teachers leave the teaching profession altogether (McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990). Of those teachers who do leave, as few as 21% have definite plans to return to special education teaching (McKnab, 1983).

There are many factors which influence special and general education teachers' career decisions, commitment, and job satisfaction. Little opportunity for growth and advancement (Berry, 1985; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987;

Metzke, 1988) and lack of support (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Metzke, 1988; Platt & Olson, 1990) are indicated by both special and general educators as related to their decisions to remain in or leave teaching. Studies have also found administrative support (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Fruth, Bredeson, & Kasten, 1982) and opportunities for personal growth (Fruth, Bredeson, and Kasten, 1982) to be associated with commitment and job satisfaction among special and general education teachers.

However, there are some factors influencing teachers' career decisions, commitment, and job satisfaction that appear to be unique to special educators. Role-design factors such as excessive meetings can be deterrents to teaching special education (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; McKnab, 1983; Platt and Olson, 1990). Lack of student progress and the demands of working with disabled students also contribute to special education teacher attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). Lower levels of stress and role ambiguity have been associated with greater job satisfaction for special education teachers; whereas, role conflict has been negatively related to special educators' professional commitment (Billingsley & Cross, 1992).

To provide a framework for understanding special education teachers' career decisions, factors affecting both special and general education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction are presented in this literature review. These factors are grouped into the following categories: a) personal teacher characteristics and background variables; b) teacher preparation and qualifications; and c) job-related factors. Variables relevant to each of these categories are examined in relationship to teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. This framework is a modification and adaptation of existing models developed by Billingsley (in press), Sweeney, Warren, and Kemis (1991), Rosenholtz (1989a), and Chapman (1983b).

#### Personal Teacher Characteristics and Background Variables

Demographic variables are associated with general and special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. For example, some studies have associated age with general education teacher attrition/retention (Metzke, 1988), commitment, and job satisfaction (Reyes, Madsen, & Taylor, 1989). For special educators, other demographic variables such as gender and academic status can affect teachers' decisions to remain in or leave special education teaching (Singer, in press) and their level of job satisfaction (Pezzei & Oratio, 1991).

Gender. Results of research studies on the effects of gender on general education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction are somewhat inconsistent. Most studies do reveal an existing relationship between gender and teacher attrition/retention. In a study conducted by Theobald (1989), the attrition rates of men and women general education teachers were largely dependent upon the interaction between gender and age. Women had higher attrition rates earlier in their teaching careers than did men, but older women were less likely to leave teaching than older men.

In the fifth follow-up survey of the National Longitudinal Study of 1972, Heyns (1988) found that men were slightly more likely to have left the teaching profession than women with less chances of returning. However, the differences between men and women teachers were largely due to the type of teaching that men entered (i.e., elementary school teaching; secondary school teaching). For example, the highest attrition rates were found among high school teachers, and numerically men dominate at this level. When level of teaching was controlled for, women at both the primary and secondary levels left teaching in larger proportions than did men.

Earlier studies also revealed that women left general education teaching at a higher rate than men. Berry (1985)

indicated that out of 210 teachers who were resigning from a school system, 77% of them were female. Similar results were found by Bowman (1984).

However, in a study by Chapman and Hutcheson (1982) of alumni who upon graduation were first employed as general educators, differences in teachers who had left and remained in the field of teaching were not explained by gender. When combined with age, race, and institution graduated from, gender explained only .03% of the variance in leaving or remaining in teaching.

Studies also reveal differing results when examining the relationship between gender and teachers' commitment and job satisfaction. In a study of 542 general education teachers, Chapman and Lowther (1982) indicated that women reported greater satisfaction with their jobs than men. Similarly, Reyes, Madsen, and Taylor (1989) found that women also had higher levels of commitment than men. On the other hand, Chapman (1983a) found that differences in teachers' personal characteristics such as gender did not significantly predict job satisfaction among general educators.

Culver, Wolfle, and Cross (1990) found an interaction between gender and race in relationship to job satisfaction and commitment. They reported that White females were more satisfied and committed to staying in teaching than were

White males, and Black males experienced more job satisfaction than did Black females. However, they did not find a significant effect of gender on commitment to teaching for Blacks.

In special education, teacher attrition/retention studies indicate that women leave special education teaching at a higher rate than men (McKnab, 1983; Singer, in press). Although women are more likely to leave special education teaching, they are also more likely to return (McKnab, 1983; Singer, 1991). Even though some of these absences are only temporary (e.g., leaving to have children; relocating due to spousal transfer), many female special educators never return to teaching (McKnab, 1983).

Findings from studies relating gender to special education teacher commitment and job satisfaction are varied. Most studies do not reveal a significant relationship between gender and commitment to special education teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) or job satisfaction (Abelson, 1986; Billingsley & Cross, 1992). However, a study by Pezzei and Oratio (1991) of speech/language pathologists indicated that females with advanced academic status and more experience were more satisfied with their teaching positions.

The differing results obtained in these studies regarding gender might be explained by the exceedingly



larger number of women teachers in general and special education teaching and the different sources used for measuring teacher attrition (e.g., resignation rates; retention rates), commitment, and job satisfaction. Due to the inconsistencies in these research findings, it is difficult to ascertain a direct and/or indirect relationship between gender and teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction.

Age. Another variable that has been associated with general and special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction is age. Grissmer, Holmes, and Terrell (1988) suggest that junior and senior-age general educators exit teaching at a higher rate than middle-age teachers. In a study of 100 general education teachers who had left the field of teaching, attrition rates for teachers under 35 were significantly higher than those for teachers over 35 (Metzke, 1988).

Studies examining teachers' age in relation to special education attrition reveal a similar pattern (McKnab, 1983; Metzke, 1988; Singer, in press). As in general education, younger and older teachers leave special education at higher rates than middle-aged teachers (Metzke, 1988; Singer, in press).

Singer (in press) suggested that the combined effects of age and gender are related to teacher attrition. After

analyzing over 6,600 special education personnel career paths, Singer (in press) found that young women were far more likely to leave special education teaching than all other demographic groups. Because young women comprise such a large proportion of the special education teaching force (Metzke, 1988; Singer, in press), this may assist in explaining some of the high attrition rates that have been reported.

The relationship between age, teacher commitment, and job satisfaction is not quite as clear. Reyes, Madsen, and Taylor (1989) found that older teachers experienced higher levels of commitment and job satisfaction than did younger teachers. However, Culver, Wolfle, and Cross (1990) indicated that older White teachers were less satisfied with their jobs than younger White teachers; no differences in job satisfaction were found among Black teachers. Special education studies did not reveal a significant relationship between age and teacher commitment (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) or job satisfaction (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Chapman, 1983a).

Race. Race alone may or may not be associated with general and special education teachers' decisions to stay in or leave teaching. Louis Harris and Associates (1988) found that approximately 40% of those minority general educators

surveyed would more than likely leave teaching within the next five years.

However, upon analysis of an extant data base consisting of all certified teachers in Washington State from 1984-87, general educators' racial origin was not correlated with their intentions to stay in or leave teaching (Theobald, 1989). Other factors such as socioeconomic status (Dworkin, 1980) and gender (Culver, Wolfle, & Cross, 1990) appear to affect the relationship between race and general education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. Dworkin (1980) indicated that minority and low status groups have more initial investments in their chosen occupation and fewer career choices available to them; therefore, they are more likely to remain in teaching.

A study by Culver, Wolfle, and Cross (1990) examined the differences in job satisfaction among 350 White early-career teachers and 375 Black early-career teachers. They found an interaction between race, gender, and academic ability when investigating job satisfaction among teachers. Culver, Wolfle, and Cross (1990) also discovered that for both Black and White teachers their commitment to the teaching profession had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction.

Even though there has been a steady decline of Black teachers entering and remaining in special education during the past decade (Gentry & Wen, 1988; Singer, in press), race alone may not be a predictor of special educators' career paths (Singer, 1991). Singer (in press) found that Black teachers were just as likely to leave or stay in special education as were White teachers. Other factors such as academic ability (Gentry & Wen, 1988; Singer, in press) and gender (Singer, in press) appear to affect Black teachers' career decisions and job satisfaction.

However, in a study of 2,695 special education teachers in Michigan who had already left the field, Singer (1991) found that the estimated odds of return were 50% higher for former Black special educators when compared to former White special educators. Of those who reentered special education teaching, Black special educators were three times more likely to stay than were White special educators (Singer, in press).

Family Status. Factors pertaining to family status have been linked to general and special education teacher attrition. General educators who are single and unencumbered with children are more likely to leave the teaching profession (Heyns, 1988). Heyns (1988) discovered that women with children are more likely to remain in or reenter teaching than single women or married women without

children. Similar results were found by Cohen, Klink, and Grana (1990). Thus, the combination of marriage and children may influence whether general education teachers remain in or leave teaching.

Marital status is also associated with special educators' career decisions. In a study of 325 Kansas special education personnel who had left teaching, McKnab (1983) found that 75% of them were married. Special educators who have resigned their teaching positions cite family-related factors as major reasons for leaving teaching (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990). Spousal relocation (Berry, 1985; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; McKnab, 1989; McKnab, 1983) and the desire to raise children (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990) may influence teachers' decisions to leave or remain in special education teaching.

Research is scarce associating family status with special and general education teachers' commitment to the teaching profession or job satisfaction.

Academic Ability. Research findings related to teachers' academic ability and their decisions to remain in or leave teaching are mixed. Schlechty and Vance (1981) examined NTE (National Teacher Examination) scores and retention rates for over 30,000 North Carolina teachers during a seven-year period. They found that teachers who

scored higher on the NTE were leaving the teaching profession at a greater rate than those who had lower scores on the NTE.

When examining career choices of over 5,100 white K-12 North Carolina teachers, Murnane, Singer, and Willett (1989) also found that NTE scores were a strong predictor of general education teacher attrition. After their first year of teaching, secondary school teachers with high NTE scores were almost twice as likely to leave when compared to those with low scores on the NTE. In any given year, high scoring elementary school teachers left teaching at a higher rate than their low or average scoring colleagues. Also, for both secondary and elementary teachers, those with higher scores on the NTE were less likely to return to teaching. Culver, Wolfle, and Cross (1990) suggest that teachers with higher academic ability may be less satisfied with their jobs and are therefore more likely to leave.

In contrast, Heyns (1988) discovered that even though former general educators had scored slightly better than current general educators on SAT tests (Scholastic Aptitude Test), these differences were quite small and insignificant. Teachers who entered the profession late or re-entered after taking a break tended to have higher SAT scores than those who entered teaching directly after college and had never left teaching. Heyns (1988) suggested that general

education teacher attrition may not necessarily deplete the teaching profession of the most talented teachers. Even if the most talented teachers are more likely to leave, they are also the most likely to re-enter.

The conflicting results obtained in these general education studies could, first of all, be due to differences in the studies' samples (e.g., different sample sizes; different demographic compositions of the samples). Another factor that might affect the studies' outcomes was the different ways in which the variable, academic ability, was measured and operationalized. Using longitudinally collected data as opposed to cross-sectional data collection could also produce different results. Finally, the diverse procedures for data analyses that were used in the studies might explain why they reached varied conclusions.

The few special education studies that have investigated the relationship between academic ability and attrition suggest that those special educators who are more academically able leave teaching at a higher rate than the less academically able (Frank & Keith, 1984; Singer, in press). In North Carolina, for example, special education teachers with high NTE scores were twice as likely to leave teaching as those with low scores on the NTE (Singer, in press). Although academically able teachers appear to be initially attracted to special education teaching, many

later leave the profession for better paying jobs and greater career advancement opportunities (Frank & Keith, 1984).

Few studies exist which have examined the effect of academic ability on general and special education teachers' job satisfaction or commitment to teaching. Culver, Wolfle, and Cross (1990) found that lower achieving White teachers were more satisfied with their jobs than were higher achieving White teachers; no differences in job satisfaction and academic ability were discovered for Black teachers. In a study of 281 speech/language pathologists, Pezzei and Oratio (1991) reported that special educators with advanced academic status were more satisfied with their jobs, and remained in their jobs longer than teachers without advanced academic status.

#### Teacher Preparation and Qualifications

Research examining the relationship of teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction to teacher preparation and qualifications is limited. Existing research does reveal that factors associated with teacher preparation and qualifications may affect general and special education teachers' decisions to stay in or leave teaching. For example, teaching experience has been associated with whether or not teachers stay in general (Heyns, 1988; Mark & Anderson, 1985) and special education



teaching (Mani, 1989; McKnab, 1983; Metzke, 1988; Pezzei & Oratio, 1991; Singer, in press). However, little research is available linking teacher preparation and qualifications variables to general or special education teacher commitment and job satisfaction.

Quality of Preparation Program. To better understand the career paths of teachers, Sweeney, Warren and Kemis (1991) developed a longitudinal model for examining factors influencing general education teachers' decisions to leave or remain in teaching. They found that teacher education graduates who, as a result of their preparation programs, had positive student teaching experiences entered teaching immediately upon graduation and remained in teaching. General educators who had inconsistent career paths (e.g., teacher education graduates who had entered teaching but left within five years or teacher education graduates who had taught intermittently over a five-year period) rated the quality of their preparation programs as low. These teachers felt less adequately prepared to plan and deliver instruction to students and were less likely to choose teaching again as a career.

Little information is available linking the quality of teacher preparation programs to special education teacher attrition. Mani (1989) found that special education administrators, building principals, special education

teachers (e.g., including those in preparation programs), and general education teachers perceived adequate preparation in special education as a key factor in retaining special educators. A study by George, George, and Grosenick (1992) of 96 teachers of the behaviorally disordered who intended to either remain in or leave their current teaching positions revealed that 65% of those surveyed felt that their coursework did not adequately prepare them for their jobs. Aspects of college training such as coursework that was too theoretical in nature and practice that was too short in duration and too narrow in scope contributed to the teachers' poor job preparation (George, George, & Grosenick, 1992). On the other hand, some studies have revealed that inadequate training is seldom selected by teachers as a reason for leaving special education teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel Bunch, & Coopman, 1987).

The quality of teacher preparation programs may also be associated with job satisfaction among general and special education teachers. Louis Harris and Associates (1984) conducted a nationwide survey of 1,981 teachers and found that 46% did not feel satisfied that "the training and preparation teachers receive today does a good job preparing them for the classroom" (p. 19). In a study of 154 first-year general and special educators, Pigge and Lovett (1985)

found that teachers' training or preparation was positively related to their job satisfaction. Pigge and Lovett (1985) also discovered that the level of job satisfaction developed during teacher preparation was likely to carry through for succeeding years in teaching. Other researchers suggest that if teacher training programs better informed and prepared potential teachers, stress among teachers may be reduced (Platt & Olson, 1990) and teacher attrition rates lowered (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982).

Extent of Preparation. The amount of educational preparation that a teacher possesses may affect attrition and retention among general educators. Some studies indicate that general education teachers with graduate degrees are less likely to leave the teaching profession than those teachers who do not have graduate degrees (Bowman, 1984; Metzke, 1988). Metzke (1988) found that the attrition rate for teachers with graduate training is significantly lower than for those teachers with undergraduate training only. Out of 150 general education teachers interviewed who were currently employed, 3/5 of them held master's degrees (Bowman, 1984).

However, other studies describe an adverse relationship between teachers' extent of preparation and general education teacher attrition. Theobald (1989) discovered that male teachers with graduate degrees are 50% more likely

to leave teaching than are males without graduate degrees. He also found no differences between retention of female teachers with graduate degrees and female teachers without graduate degrees.

Reyes, Madsen, and Taylor (1989) found similar results when examining the relationship between teacher preparation and commitment. They discovered that teachers with graduate degrees had lower levels of commitment than teachers with only undergraduate degrees. Reyes, Madsen, and Taylor (1989) suggested that teachers pursue graduate degrees as a means of fulfilling their needs which are not being met by their school district.

Special education studies also yield conflicting results when examining the relationship between attrition and the extent of teachers' preparation. In comparing 100 current and 100 former special education teachers, Metzke (1988) found that those with graduate training had lower attrition rates. Higher salaries, increased benefits or seniority, and higher levels of commitment may influence teachers with graduate degrees to remain in the field of special education teaching (Metzke, 1988).

On the other hand, some studies indicate that special educators with training at the Master's degree level or higher are more likely to leave teaching than those with Bachelor of Arts degrees (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982;

McKnab, 1983). In a study of 33 teachers of the emotionally disturbed, Lawrenson and McKinnon (1982) suggested that because teachers with Bachelor of Arts degrees reported receiving more positive recognition and more consistent administrative and staff support, they were more likely to remain in teaching.

Teaching Experience. The pattern for general and special education teachers leaving the field of education in relationship to years of teaching experience has been described as a U-shaped curve (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). Beginning general education teachers and those at the end of their teaching career tend to leave the profession at higher rates than teachers in the middle of their careers (Heyns, 1988; Mark & Anderson, 1985). Up to 30% of new teachers entering the field do not survive beyond their second year of teaching (Henry, 1986; Mark & Anderson, 1985). Over half of all new general educators leave teaching within the first five years of their career (Henry, 1986; Heyns, 1988; Mark & Anderson, 1985). Opportunities to take a break from teaching (Henry, 1986; Heyns, 1988), higher paying jobs (Henry, 1986), inability to cope with teaching problems (Henry, 1986), and levels of job satisfaction (Pigge & Lovett, 1985) affect whether or not beginning general education teachers will remain in or leave teaching.

Special educators with five years teaching experience or less also leave teaching at a very high rate (McKnab, 1983; Metzke, 1988; Singer, in press). After analyzing approximately 6,500 North Carolina and Michigan state special education personnel files over a 13 year period, Singer (in press) found that 12-13% of newly hired special educators leave their jobs by the end of the first year, 11% leave by the end of the second year, and another 11% leave teaching by the end of the third year. After five years, 43% of the newly hired special education teachers in each state were no longer teaching in that state.

Singer (in press) also reported that after these initial five years, the risk of leaving teaching steadily declined. By the eighth year, less than 5% of the special educators were still leaving teaching. After ten years, about 45% of the special education teachers were still teaching (only ten to fifteen points lower than the percentage of teachers still teaching after five years).

Another study conducted by Singer (1991) revealed that teaching experience was also related to teachers' decisions to reenter special education teaching. Singer (1991) found that the longer a former special educator had taught, the more likely he or she was to return to special education teaching. For each extra year of teaching experience, the estimated odds of return were 9% higher.

Increased teaching experience may also be associated with special education teachers' level of job satisfaction. Pezzei and Oratio (1991) suggested that a reciprocal relationship exists between teachers' seniority and job satisfaction. They found that speech/language pathologists who were satisfied with their jobs remained in their special education teaching positions longer than those who were dissatisfied with their jobs. Pezzei and Oratio (1991) also discovered that increased teaching experience in one or more school systems could lead to greater job satisfaction among special education teachers.

Certification. There is limited information pertaining to general education teacher certification and attrition/retention. Metzke (1988) identified attrition rates for fully certified Wisconsin general education teachers over a three-year period from 1985-1988 as 6.5%, 6.3%, and 5.8% respectively. However, data were not provided for comparisons with teachers who had provisional certification.

In interviews with urban kindergarten, math, and science teachers who were currently employed or had resigned urban teaching positions, Bowman (1984) did not find a relationship between attrition and endorsement area. All of the currently employed teachers had endorsements in their assigned teaching area as did 9/10 of the teachers who had

resigned. Whether or not general educators were certified in their area of teaching assignment did not appear to affect their decisions to leave or remain in teaching.

Conflicting results have emerged from studies examining type of certification and its effect on special educators' decisions to leave or remain in teaching. Some studies indicate that fully certified special education teachers have lower attrition rates than those teachers with provisional certification (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Metzke, 1988). On the other hand, McKnab (1983) discovered that fully certified special educators are more likely to leave teaching than provisionally certified special education teachers. George, George, and Grosenick (1992) found no significant relationship between certification and special educators' career decisions.

#### Job-related Factors

Much of the research on general education teacher attrition and retention indicates that job-related factors influence teachers' decisions to remain in or leave teaching (Bowman, 1984; Chapman & Green, 1986; Louis Harris & Associates, 1985), teachers' commitment to teaching (Martinez-Pons, 1990;), and teachers' level of job satisfaction (Wangberg, Metzger, & Levitov, 1982). Low salary (Bowman, 1984; Henderson, 1982; Jacobson, 1988), lack of administrative support (Chapman & Green, 1986), and



little opportunity for growth and advancement (Bowman, 1984) have been determined important to general educators' career plans.

Job-related factors also influence whether or not special education teachers leave or remain in teaching (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1992; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; George, George, & Grosenick, 1992; Kells, Banman, & Daub, 1982; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Mani, 1989; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990) and whether or not they are satisfied with their jobs (Abelson, 1986). Student-related variables (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Lawrenson and McKinnon, 1982; Metzke, 1988), role-design factors (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990), and stress (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Public Services, 1986) affect special education teacher attrition and retention.

Support. Sources of support for both general and special educators can include administrators, parents, and colleagues. For general education teachers, support and recognition is significantly related to occupational stability (Bowman, 1984; Chapman & Green, 1986; Metzke, 1988), commitment to teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988), and job satisfaction

(Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Chapman, 1983a; Chapman & Lowther, 1982; Engelking, 1986; Fruth, Bredeson, & Kasten, 1982; Litt & Turk, 1985; Raschke, Dedrick, Strathe, & Hawkes, 1985).

Over half of those urban kindergarten, math, and science teachers interviewed who were currently employed or had recently resigned indicated administrative, parental, and collegial support as factors that could influence their resignation decisions (Bowman, 1984). Administrative support to general education teachers can be delivered in a variety of ways (e.g., providing teachers with opportunities for making decisions; recognizing teachers for a job well done; and providing assistance to teachers with student discipline problems). The opportunity to work on and make decisions about curriculum development and implementation is highly correlated with general educators' decisions to remain in teaching (Metzke, 1988) and their level of job satisfaction (Raschke, Dedrick, Strathe, & Hawkes, 1985). Providing general educators opportunities for personal and professional growth can also deter them from leaving the teaching field (Bowman, 1984; Fruth, Bredeson, & Kasten, 1982; Litt & Turk, 1985).

Not only is general educators' job satisfaction associated with administrative support (Chapman, 1983a; Chapman & Lowther, 1982; Engelking, 1986; Fruth, Bredeson, &

Kasten, 1982), but parental (Engelking, 1986) and collegial support (Chapman, 1983a; Engelking, 1986) as well. In a study of 442 elementary and secondary teachers, Engelking (1986) found that teachers receiving recognition such as verbal praise from parents and colleagues were more satisfied with their jobs.

Support has also been linked to general education teacher commitment (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988). When interviewing high school teachers and administrators, Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) found that teachers who received more support and respect from their building administrators and colleagues were more committed to the teaching profession. Maintaining a consistent school environment (e.g., school environments in which order is maintained, roles are clearly defined, and rules are enforced fairly and rigorously) and providing physical support to teachers (e.g., providing adequate teaching supplies and materials; maintaining adequate buildings and facilities) can positively affect general educators' commitment to teaching.

Lack of support has been identified by many special educators as a primary reason for leaving special education teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; McKnab, 1983; Metzke, 1988; Platt & Olson, 1990; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Pupil Services, 1986). In a study of 548

special educators in Virginia, Billingsley and Cross (1991) found lack of support and cooperation from administrative personnel to be a major reason why special educators left special education teaching. Inadequate administrative support was also identified as a moderate or major deterrent to special education teaching by over half of those surveyed (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). Mani (1989) found that support from special education directors and building-level principals was perceived as important to retaining special education teachers.

Similarly, in a study of 96 SED teachers (teachers of the seriously emotionally disturbed), George, George, and Grosenick (1992) found that supervisory support was significantly related to teachers' career decisions. They discovered that teachers who perceived supervisory support as adequate were more likely to remain in teaching. When support from supervisors was perceived as inadequate, teachers of the emotionally disturbed became dissatisfied with their jobs and expressed intentions to quit.

Platt and Olson (1990) suggest that both administrative and parental support can influence special educators' decisions to remain in or leave teaching. Of those former special educators surveyed, 55% indicated lack of recognition and support from principals as factors that were important or extremely important to leaving the teaching

field. Similarly, lack of support from parents was cited by 54% of the special educators as an important or extremely important reason for leaving special education teaching.

Collegial support can also affect special educators' career decisions. Out of 96 SED teachers surveyed, George, George, and Grosenick (1992) found that 65% rated support from classroom teachers as totally inadequate or somewhat inadequate. Opportunities for teachers of emotionally disabled students to collaborate and share with colleagues were infrequent leading to professional isolation and increased desires to leave their special education teaching positions (George, George, & Grosenick, 1992).

Studies also suggest that lack of support from administrators, colleagues, and parents can lead to reduced levels of special education teacher commitment (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) and job satisfaction (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Pezzei & Oratio, 1991). In a study of 463 special education teachers in Virginia, Billingsley and Cross (1992) found that special educators who experienced greater leadership support demonstrated higher levels of organizational commitment. Beginning special education teachers also perceive administrative support as an important contributor to their attitudes toward teaching (Karge & Freiberg, 1992). A study of 457 beginning special education teachers (i.e., teachers who had

been a special education classroom full-time for less than three years) revealed that administrative support factors such as teachers' participation in decision making and principals' acquisition of resources are positively related to beginning teachers' job attitudes. Similarly, studies conducted by Pezzei and Oratio (1991) and Lawrenson and McKinnon (1982) revealed that special education teachers receiving administrative and collegial support were more satisfied with their jobs.

Work Assignment. Various work assignment variables can affect teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. For example, factors such as large class sizes and large caseloads can influence general educators' (Metzke, 1988; Theobald, 1989) and special educators' (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Platt & Olson, 1990) decisions to remain in or leave teaching. Inadequate school facilities (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982) and inadequate resources (Platt & Olson, 1990) have also been associated with special educators' career decisions.

Role-design Factors. One aspect of work assignment that has received attention in the literature is role-design factors. Duties and responsibilities that are inherent to teaching may influence whether or not general and special education teachers choose to remain in the profession. General educators in a southeastern

metropolitan school system resigned their teaching positions because of the "everyday work life of a teacher" (Berry, 1985, p. 15). Factors such as large pupil/staff ratios and performance of clerical duties can be detrimental to general education teacher retention (Metzke, 1988; Theobald, 1989) and can have a negative effect on teachers' commitment to teaching (Martinez-Pons, 1990). Excessive paperwork (Litt & Turk, 1985; Raschke, Dedrick, Strathe, & Hawkes, 1985) and lack of time (Litt & Turk, 1985; Raschke, Dedrick, Strathe, & Hawkes, 1985) are other role-design factors that can lead to job dissatisfaction among general education teachers. Having "too much work to do with little time to accomplish it" (Litt & Turk, 1985, p. 184) and "having to spend too much time on administrative tasks" (Louis Harris & Associates, 1984, p. 19) were cited by general educators as examples of how lack of time contributed to their job dissatisfaction and decision to leave teaching.

Factors related to teaching assignment can also affect the occupational stability of general and special educators. Teaching level and subject area can influence general education teachers' career decisions and levels of job satisfaction. Studies have shown that secondary level teachers are more likely to leave teaching than those at the elementary level (Cohen, Klink, & Grana, 1990; Grissmer, Holmes, & Terrell, 1988; Louis Harris & Associates, 1985;

Murname, Singer, & Willett, 1989) and are less likely to return (Murname, Singer, & Willett, 1989). General educators in certain subject areas such as science and mathematics have higher attrition rates (Berry, 1985; Grissmer, Holmes, & Terrell, 1988; Hounshell & Griffin, 1989; Murname, Singer, & Willett, 1989).

Factors associated with the special education teachers' role appear to have a major impact on decisions to stay in or leave teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990). Special educators frequently cite excessive paperwork as the primary reason for leaving special education teaching (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1992; Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Platt & Olson, 1990) and as a major deterrent to reentry (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). Platt and Olson (1990) found that 74% of the 240 special educators surveyed cited too much paperwork as important or extremely important to leaving the teaching profession.

Other role-design factors that may affect special education teacher attrition are excessive meetings (Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman; 1987) and too many students on teachers' caseloads (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Platt & Olson, 1990). These factors may result in higher levels of role conflict and stress among special educators (Billingsley & Cross,



1992) and lower levels of commitment (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) or job satisfaction (Pezzei & Oratio, 1991).

Researchers suggest that administrators need to recognize and eliminate these non-instructional concerns as a means to keep special educators in the teaching field (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987).

Variables such as teaching level (Schofer & Duncan, 1986; Singer, in press) and teaching exceptionality area (Metzke, 1988; Platt & Olson, 1990; Singer, in press) may also influence whether or not special educators' remain in teaching. As in general education, special education studies indicate that secondary level teachers are more likely to leave teaching than elementary level teachers (Schofer & Duncan, 1986; Singer, in press). Singer (in press) found that special educators at the elementary level stayed in teaching an average of 1.6 years longer than those at the secondary level.

Teacher attrition rates may vary for different exceptionality areas. Teachers who are certified to teach or teach students with emotional disturbances (McKnab, 1989; Metzke, 1988; Platt & Olson, 1990; Schofer & Duncan, 1986; Singer, in press; Smith, 1981), students with speech/language disabilities (Schofer & Duncan, 1986; Singer, in press), and students who are severely disabled (McKnab, 1983) are more likely to leave special education

teaching. Singer (1991) found that special educators who provide support services or speech therapy are also the least likely to return to special education teaching. LD teachers (Platt & Olson, 1990; Singer, in press) and teachers of students who are physically and multiply disabled or mentally disabled (Singer, in press) seem to have more occupational stability than teachers of other exceptionality areas.

School-related Factors. Another aspect of work assignment that my determine general education teacher retention, commitment, and job satisfaction are school-related factors. Contrary to common beliefs, the teachers who are most likely to leave the profession are not those who are teaching in the most troubled or troubling schools; the teachers who are more likely to leave have taught in some of the most desirable settings (Heyns, 1988). For example, suburban schools lose more general educators each year than do urban schools with rural schools losing the least teachers of all (Heyns, 1988). Teachers in rural schools appear to be more satisfied with their jobs than teachers in city schools (Louis Harris & Associates, 1984). Also, large schools tend to have lower attrition rates than small or medium-sized schools (Heyns, 1988) and higher levels of teacher commitment (Reyes, Madsen, & Taylor, 1989). General education teachers in wealthy districts tend

to be more likely to leave their jobs than teachers in poorer districts (Theobald, 1989).

Studies related to teaching location and special education teacher attrition have produced varied results. Some reveal that special education teachers in rural settings leave teaching at a higher rate than those in urban settings (Metzke, 1988). On the other hand, a study by Pezzei and Oratio (1991) indicated that special educators in urban settings were more dissatisfied with their jobs and were more likely to leave their teaching positions than were teachers in suburban or rural settings. However, McKnab (1989) did not find a significant difference in attrition rates among urban and rural special educators.

Teaching location can also refer to the placement of special education classrooms on school sites. George, George, and Grosenick (1992) found that teachers of the emotionally disturbed who were planning to leave their teaching positions, for the most part, taught in self-contained classrooms located in general education buildings. These special educators felt isolated, both physically and psychologically, from the general school environment which in turn affected their commitment to teaching.

Student Factors. Factors related to students can positively and negatively affect general and special education teachers' career plans. Achieving academic and

social success with their students can positively influence teachers' decisions to remain in teaching (Cohen, Klink, & Grana; 1990) and can increase their commitment to teaching (Bredeson, Fruth, & Kasten, 1984; Farber, 1984) or levels of job satisfaction (Litt & Turk, 1985; Raschke, Dedrick, Strathe, & Hawkes, 1985). On the other hand, some studies indicate that student discipline problems can lower general educators' level of commitment to teaching (Martinez-Pons, 1990) or cause general education teachers to become dissatisfied with their jobs (Engelking, 1986) and leave their teaching positions (Bowman, 1984; Cohen, Klink, & Grana, 1990).

Among special education teachers, student-related factors have been frequently cited as primary reasons for leaving the teaching profession (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Metzke, 1988). The inability to meet students' needs has had a major impact on teachers' decisions to transfer from special education to general education teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1991) or to leave teaching altogether (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Metzke, 1988). Other student variables such as lack of student progress, demands of working with disabled students, and too much time working with the same students can contribute to special education teacher attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1991) and job dissatisfaction (Pezzei & Oratio, 1991).

However, Mani (1989) found that teachers' perceptions of student-related factors can be positively related to special educators' career decisions. Special and general education teachers, special education administrators, and building-level principals perceived the desire to work with disabled children as the primary reason for the retention of special educators (Mani, 1989).

Work Rewards. Lortie (1975) identified the following dimensions of rewards as being evident in teaching: intrinsic, extrinsic, and ancillary rewards. Some researchers such as Martinez-Pons (1990) and Reyes, Madsen, and Taylor (1989) suggest that using intrinsic rewards may be more effective in increasing teachers' job commitment and satisfaction than organizational incentives. Feelings of competence and success is a type of intrinsic reward that appears to influence general educators' career decisions (Chapman & Hutcheson, 1986; Sweeney, Warren, & Kemis, 1991) and commitment (Martinez-Pons, 1990). For example, Chapman and Hutcheson (1986) found that those general educators who had remained in teaching rated themselves more competent in their abilities to organize time effectively, plan or organize activities, and deal with the public. Other intrinsic benefits such as the reward from working with children (Raschke, Dedrick, Strathe, & Hawkes, 1985) and personal satisfaction from seeing children progress (Cohen,

Klink, & Grana, 1990) have positively affected general educators' overall job satisfaction.

Studies reveal mixed results when examining the importance of extrinsic rewards such as salary to general education teachers' career decisions. In two separate studies of general education teachers, Henderson (1982) discovered that 1/3 of those surveyed were considering leaving the field of teaching primarily because of low salaries. Findings in other studies revealed that approximately 75% of currently employed teachers regarded low salary as a factor that could increase their job dissatisfaction (Litt & Turk, 1985) and precipitate their resignation (Bowman, 1984). When general education teachers were unable to meet students' needs or were not receiving adequate support, salary appeared to become an issue related to attrition (Metzke, 1988). School districts which improved the relative attractiveness of their salary offerings were better able to retain their teachers, especially in suburban areas (Jacobson, 1988).

However, some teachers perceive the existence of extrinsically oriented incentives such as salary as having a negligible effect on their commitment to teaching (Martinez-Pons, 1990) and their level of job satisfaction (Bredeson, Fruth, & Kasten, 1983; Chapman, 1983a; Pigge & Lovett, 1985; Raschke, Dedrick, Strathe, & Hawkes, 1985). The importance

of salary in predicting whether general educators leave teaching may diminish over time due to increased difficulties in switching occupations and insensitivity to salary changes (Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1989).

Lacking the potential for career advancement is another extrinsic reward that may directly affect general education teachers' resignation decisions (Bowman, 1984), commitment to teaching (Fruth, Bredeson, & Kasten, 1982), and job satisfaction (Bredeson, Fruth, & Kasten, 1983; Litt & Turk, 1985).

Contradictory results have also been reported in studies examining the relationship between ancillary rewards and general educators' decisions to remain in teaching and job satisfaction. In personal interviews with 30 general education teachers who were currently employed as teachers, Bredeson, Fruth, and Kasten (1983) discovered job security to be the most frequently cited reason for why those teachers had remained in teaching. On the other hand, Pigge and Lovett (1985) found job security to be one of the factors that least contributed to beginning general education teachers' job satisfaction.

Rewards can also influence special educators' decisions to remain in or leave teaching and their job satisfaction. Few studies, however, discuss the affect of intrinsic rewards on special educators' career decisions and job

satisfaction. Lack of satisfaction with teaching as a career (Schofer & Duncan, 1986) and lack of feelings of success or accomplishment (George, George, & Grosenick, 1992) have been linked to special education teacher attrition. Intrinsic rewards such as feelings of worth and accomplishment (Gentry & Wen, 1988; Seery, 1990) and self-achievement on the job (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982) also seem to affect special educators' overall satisfaction with their jobs.

One aspect of rewards that has been more frequently examined in relationship to special education teacher attrition/retention is extrinsic rewards, especially salary. Studies in special education show that salary (Berry, 1985; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Pupil Services, 1986) can influence special educators' career decisions. One of the reasons that special educators give for resigning from their teaching positions is for better paying jobs (Berry, 1985; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982). Teachers with higher paying teaching jobs are less likely to leave special education teaching (Singer, in press). Some researchers imply that higher salaries could be used as an incentive to keep special educators in the field of teaching (Platt & Olson, 1990; Singer, in press).



However, salary alone may not account for special education teachers' career changes. Metzke (1988) found that salary appeared to become an issue only when teachers were dissatisfied with other elements of the profession (e.g., administrative support, ability to meet students' needs). Other researchers have indicated an interaction between salary, stress, and job satisfaction as they affect special education teacher attrition (Berry, 1985; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987).

Lack of opportunities for advancement also appear to affect special educators' career decisions (Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Platt & Olson, 1990). Over half of those special education teachers surveyed identified a lack of opportunity for promotion as important or extremely important to leaving the field (Platt & Olson, 1990). Providing special educators with opportunities for career advancement and personal/professional growth may assist in alleviating some of the special education teacher attrition problems (Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987).

Few studies also exist on the relationship between ancillary rewards and special education teacher attrition/retention or job satisfaction. Ancillary rewards such as work hours (Seery, 1990) and vacations (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Seery, 1990) appear to influence special educators' satisfaction with their jobs. For example, in a

study of teachers of the behaviorally disordered, Seery (1990) found that those surveyed ranked work hours and vacations third as a job satisfier for them.

Stress. The amount of stress general and special education teachers encounter as a result of their job impacts their decisions regarding career change. General educators who more frequently find themselves in stressful work situations are more likely to leave teaching (Louis Harris & Associates, 1985). The low status of teaching within society can also lead to stress and dissatisfaction among general educators (Cohen, Klink, & Grana, 1990; Farber, 1984; Litt & Turk, 1985). Louis Harris and Associates (1985) found that 64% of those current and former teachers interviewed discovered society's view of teaching and the professional prestige surrounding teaching to be worse than they had expected it would be. Many general education teachers enter the field with high, positive expectations about their jobs only to discover the negative connotations teaching has within society.

Findings in special education studies reveal that teachers indicating intentions to leave as well as actual leaving behaviors are associated with job-related stress (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; McKnab, 1983; Platt & Olson, 1990; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Pupil Services, 1986). When surveying 76 special educators who

had left the field of teaching, Platt and Olson (1990) revealed that 43% of them cited stress-producing factors as the primary reason for leaving. Some studies link other variables such as teacher burnout (Schofer & Duncan, 1986) and emotional exhaustion (McKnab, 1983) to stress.

The amount of stress experienced by special education teachers can vary according to teaching assignment (Singer, in press), salary (Platt & Olson, 1990), and administrative support (Platt & Olson, 1990). A study of 295 teachers of the emotionally disturbed indicated that stress can also be related to a teacher's age with older teachers experiencing less stress and strain than younger teachers (Benz, 1987). Stress can become a significant factor in special education teacher attrition when teachers do not receive adequate support, are unable to meet students' needs, or have little opportunity to work on the curriculum (Metzke, 1988). Efforts to reduce stress in special education might focus on potential sources of stress for teachers and strategies for coping with stress (Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Platt & Olson, 1990).

**The Need For Further Research on Employee Attrition/  
Retention, Commitment, and Job Satisfaction in  
Special Education Teaching**

While conducting the literature review, the need for research that examines the broad range of forces influencing special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment,

and job satisfaction in urban settings has emerged. The needs or concerns for further research are as follows:

Special education personnel shortages are expected to continue to increase in the future.

Few researchers have studied special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction.

Differences in the terminology and definitions used in teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction studies produce inconsistent research findings.

The methodology employed in previous teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction studies yields contradictory research findings.

Each of these needs will be addressed and discussed in detail below.

Special education personnel shortages are expected to continue to increase in the future.

At a time when the number of disabled children throughout the United States is increasing, the field of special education is experiencing teacher shortages (Darling-Hammond, 1984). Attrition rates for special educators have risen over the past decade and are expected to continue to rise (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). Attrition coupled with the decline in the number of teachers entering the profession has resulted in severe personnel shortages in special education (Fourteenth Annual Report to Congress, 1992; Hooper, 1987; National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, 1988). A study by Smith-Davis, Burke, and Noel (1984) revealed that 22 out of the 54 jurisdictions

in United States (i.e., states, territories, and the District of Columbia) were experiencing shortages among special education and related services personnel.

Researchers suggest that the current and incoming supply of teachers may satisfy only 65-80% of the future demand for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Hooper, 1987).

Because attrition is the major contributor to the personnel shortages in special education (Report to Congress, 1989), research is needed which addresses factors affecting special educators' decisions to leave or remain in the profession. Until studies examine variables which influence the career paths, commitment, and job satisfaction of special educators who intend to leave teaching or have already left teaching, researchers' knowledge and understanding of teacher attrition will remain fragmented.

Few researchers have studied special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction.

The research that exists on special education teacher attrition and retention does not provide "a comprehensive picture of why special educators leave their positions" (Billingsley & Cross, 1991, p. 6). Grissmer and Kirby (1987) perceive teacher attrition research as "sporadic and piecemeal" (p. xviii). Because of variations in terminology and methodology, findings from empirical attrition studies are often inconsistent and contradictory (Chapman & Green, 1986; Theobald, 1989).

Of those attrition studies that do exist, few have addressed why special educators actually leave their teaching positions (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). No published research studies were found that specifically addressed factors related to special education attrition and retention in urban settings; even though, research has indicated that attrition rates for teachers in urban schools are markedly high (Haberman, 1987; Metzke, 1988). Therefore, research that expands special education teacher attrition studies to urban settings is needed to gain a better understanding of the unique problems facing these teachers. This area of research is extremely important as attrition rates continue to rise among urban special educators. Increased knowledge of special educators' career plans, commitment, and job satisfaction is vital to assist in developing effective policies for attracting and retaining teachers in urban special education settings.

Differences in the terminology and definitions used in teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction studies produce inconsistent research findings.

Another need for research in urban special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction results from the differing terminology used in prior studies. A variety of terms have been used by researchers to represent and describe attrition. Some of the terms used in the literature for attrition are: turnover

rate (Grady, 1989); survival rate (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Mark & Anderson, 1985); and resignation rate (Bowman, 1984). Each of these different terms for teacher attrition convey different meanings which can result in misinterpretations of research findings.

Researchers have also operationalized the term "attrition" in different ways. For example, Boe (1990) operationalized attrition as transferring between specializations and schools or exit attrition (e.g., leaving the teaching field for another activity). In contrast, Theobald (1989) defines teacher attrition as transferring to another school, leaving public teaching, or retiring. Studies which include several different definitions for teacher attrition can yield biased results and inaccurate depictions of attrition in special education.

Research using terminology and definitions for special education teacher attrition that are consistent with the studies' purpose and methodology are necessary to ensure accuracy in the interpretation of the studies' findings. The diversity that exists in prior research studies does not provide a solid foundation on which new knowledge and understanding of teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction can be readily built.

The methodology employed in previous attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction studies yields contradictory research findings.

Varying methodology employed in previous attrition studies has led to inconsistent and conflicting research findings. For example, some researchers have analyzed extant databases to gather information on special educators' career plans. Others have conducted surveys to identify factors influencing special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. Past research studies have primarily used data gathered through fixed response questionnaires and surveys on which to base their findings. Therefore, limitations and restrictions are placed on the teachers' responses. In doing so, important reasons why special educators' leave the profession may be overlooked.

To provide a more comprehensive picture of attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction in special education, an in-depth examination of this area is needed. Studies which employ qualitative research techniques for data collection and analysis would assist in identifying "the tacit, often hidden aspects of organizational life" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 15) that can influence special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. For example, face-to-face interviews with special education personnel who intend to remain in or leave teaching would provide new insights of



their work experiences and how these experiences affect their career decisions and plans. These in-depth interviews would provide vast amounts of rich data thereby increasing the understanding of factors which contribute to special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. The limitations and restrictions earlier research studies' methodology have placed on teachers' responses could be reduced or eliminated.

Similarly, because the samples used in previous special education teacher attrition studies have been small and geographically restricted (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Heyns, 1988), limited data is available to help explain why teachers are leaving the field. For example, researchers such as Dangel, Bunch, and Coopman (1987) and Lawrenson and McKinnon (1982) used information obtained from as few as 30 respondents to make conclusions regarding attrition and job satisfaction among special education teachers. These small and geographically limited samples do not provide a clear, comprehensive picture of special education teachers' career decisions. Research is needed which uses larger, broader-based samples in its data collection thereby producing more information on which to broaden understandings of attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction in special education.

### **Chapter Summary**

The examination of previous special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction studies has revealed the need for further research in this area. As personnel shortages in special education continue to increase, research is needed which investigates why special educators are leaving their teaching positions. Previous research studies have not provided a clear, comprehensive picture of special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction. Future research studies providing in-depth explorations into special educators' career intentions, commitment, and job satisfaction are vital to understanding teacher attrition and retaining qualified special education personnel.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

Research findings reviewed and discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 indicate a need for further research in special education teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction, especially in urban settings. This study is part of a larger three-year project funded by the U.S. Department of Education to explore attrition among special educators in the Memphis City Schools. The three-year project is being conducted by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) in collaboration with the Memphis City Schools (MCS), Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI & SU), and Memphis State University (MSU).

The three-year project will examine attrition/retention in the MCS and contains two major components: a survey research component and a strategic planning component. During the first two years, the project will focus primarily on the survey research component which consists of four studies and a total of ten surveys. Data gathered from the studies and surveys will then be used as part of the strategic planning component designed to develop a five-year strategic plan to enhance the retention of qualified special education teachers in the MCS. The strategic planning

component will take place during the second and third years of the project.

As indicated in Figure 1, this study (i.e., the Influencing Factors Study) is one of the four studies being conducted during the survey research phase of the project. The purpose of this study is to understand the influences of career plans, commitment, and job satisfaction among special educators who intend to remain in and leave special education teaching in the MCS. Findings from this study will be used in the development of other data collection instruments for subsequent phases of the three-year project.

The remainder of this chapter describes the research setting, population and sample, and data collection and analysis procedures used in this study.

### **Setting**

The Memphis City Schools (MCS) was selected as the site for this study of special education teacher attrition/retention in urban schools. First of all, MCS is the 15th largest school district in the nation and serves 107,819 students in grades K-12 (Research Triangle Institute, 1991). The MCS has 163 schools and employs a total of 5,225 teachers, 613 of whom are special education teachers (Research Triangle Institute, 1991). The city of

1991-92 School Year

1992-93 School Year

1993-94 School Year

..... Special Education Teachers .....

*Screening Study*  
Current Special  
Education Teachers

*Comprehensive Commitment  
and Retention Study*  
All Current Special  
Education Teachers

*Influencing Factors Study*  
Sample of Current  
Special Education Teachers

*Exiter Study*  
All Special Education  
Teachers Exiting from  
1990-91

*Exiter Study*  
All Special Education  
Teachers Exiting from  
1991-92

*Exiter Study*  
All Special Education  
Teachers Exiting from  
1992-93

..... General Education Teachers .....

*Exiter Study*  
Sample of General  
Education Teachers Exiting  
from 1990-91

*Exiter Study*  
Sample of General  
Education Teachers Exiting  
from 1991-92

*Exiter Study*  
Sample of General  
Education Teachers Exiting  
from 1992-93

*Comprehensive Commitment  
and Retention Study*  
Sample of Current General  
Education Teachers

Figure 1. Survey research phase of the three-year project.

Memphis has a population of 640,000 and is the 18th largest city in the United States (USA Today, June 14, 1991) making the MCS one of the nation's largest urban school districts.

Another reason that the MCS was chosen as the setting for this study was that the school district faces many of the teacher attrition/retention problems generally associated with large urban school districts. For example, many of the special educators who leave teaching in the MCS transfer to special education teaching in the adjoining county school system. Administrators from the MCS have expressed concern about retaining qualified special education teachers and developing strategies to reduce teacher loss, job dissatisfaction, and burnout among special educators.

#### **Population and Sample**

As noted earlier, a total of 613 special education teachers are employed in the MCS. The exceptionality areas that these special educators teach include: developmental delay, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, learning disability, intellectual giftedness, visually impairment, hearing impairment, health impairment, physical impairment, speech/language impairment, autism, deaf/blind, multihandicapped, and traumatic brain injury. Special education services are delivered to students with

disabilities in resource and self-contained settings at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Prior to this study, each of the 613 special education teachers was mailed a screening survey instrument (see Appendix A) to obtain preliminary information regarding their career plans, commitment, and job satisfaction. A total of 470 completed screening survey instruments were received for a response rate of 77%. Data collected from this instrument were merged with teachers' background information (e.g., teachers' age, gender, race, family status, career ladder level, degree(s) held, NTE scores, teaching experience, and current teaching assignment) obtained from MCS personnel files. Statistical analyses of the screening instrument data were conducted as part of the larger three-year project (i.e., the analysis of the screening instrument was not a part of this study). Appendix B contains the data analysis plan which describes how the screening instrument was analyzed.

Information obtained from the analysis of the screening instrument was compiled into a printout which included:

- composite scores for teachers' job satisfaction and commitment
- separate job satisfaction scores
- separate commitment scores
- teachers' identification numbers
- name of school where teachers taught
- teachers' age
- teachers' gender
- teachers' race
- teachers' career ladder level

- teachers' NTE scores
- teachers' areas of endorsement
- exceptionality area teachers taught
- grade level(s) teachers taught
- number of years teachers taught in MCS

From the analysis of the screening instrument data, three distinct groups of special educators emerged. First, examination of the respondents' job satisfaction and commitment scores revealed that 61 of the respondents were extremely satisfied with their current jobs (i.e., their job satisfaction composite scores ranged from 1.22 to 1.78) and were planning to remain in their current teaching position (i.e., they had commitment scores of 3, "plan to remain until I am eligible for retirement", or commitment scores of 4, "plan to remain as long as I am able"). These became the teachers from which Group 1, "Stayers", was chosen.

Further examination of the data revealed that 41 of the respondents were very dissatisfied with their jobs (i.e., their job satisfaction composite scores ranged from 2.78 to 3.56) and were planning to leave their special education teaching position in the MCS (i.e., they had commitment scores of 1, "definitely plan to leave special education teaching as soon as I can", or commitment scores of 2, "will probably continue until something better comes along"). Group 2, "Leavers", was chosen from these special education teachers.

The third teacher group that emerged from the data was both satisfied and dissatisfied with their current teaching



position (i.e., their job satisfaction composite scores ranged from 2.22 to 2.67). Out of this group, 42 respondents indicated that they were undecided about their future career plans (i.e., they had commitment scores of 5, "undecided at this time about how long I plan to remain in special education teaching in MCS or outside of MCS"). These became the teachers from which Group 3, "Undecideds", were selected.

To choose those teachers who would actually participate in the face-to-face interviews, two other factors were considered: teachers' reasons for wanting to remain in or leave their current teaching position and teachers' demographic variables. For each of the three groups, reasons that teachers provided for staying in or leaving special education teaching in the MCS were carefully examined. Some of the teachers were eliminated as possible interviewees based on their responses (e.g., teachers who were leaving solely because of retirement and teachers who were undecided about their career plans but did not identify both reasons for staying and leaving were not considered for participation in the interviews).

Finally, teacher demographic variables were examined to assist in identifying those special educators who would participate in this study. First of all, the demographic variables for the interviewees replicated as closely as

possible the demographic information for all of the screening survey respondents (i.e., the percentage of Black and White teachers selected for this study was proportionate to the number of Blacks and Whites who completed the screening survey instrument) and MCS special education teaching force. Secondly, each of the three groups contained teachers from a variety of exceptionality areas and service delivery options.

Based on the analysis of the screening instrument data, a purposive sample of 60 special educators with specific career plans and job attitudes (e.g., commitment and satisfaction) were selected to participate in this study. These 60 teachers were divided (e.g., 20 special education teachers in each group) into the following three categories:

**Group 1, "Stayers":** Committed and satisfied special education teachers who intend to remain as special education teachers in the MCS.

**Group 2, "Leavers":** Special educators who are dissatisfied, not committed, and plan to leave special education teaching in the MCS.

**Group 3, "Undecideds":** Special education teachers who are both satisfied and dissatisfied with various aspects of their jobs and are undecided about their career plans.

Telephone calls were used to solicit teachers' participation in this study. Appendix C contains the script used during the telephone calls. Postcards were then mailed to each of the study's participants to confirm the date, time, and place of the interviews.

## Procedures

This study used qualitative research data collection and analysis techniques as a means of better understanding why special educators intended to remain in or leave special education teaching in the MCS. As stated earlier, previous research studies on teacher attrition/retention, commitment, and job satisfaction have not provided a comprehensive picture of the issue. The use of qualitative research was vital to gaining new insights into teacher attrition/retention and identifying the hidden aspects of organizational life that might influence special education teachers' career decisions, commitment, and job satisfaction.

Qualitative research methodology is especially useful in studies which:

- delve in depth into complexities and processes
- seek to examine relevant variables that have not yet been identified
- explore the reasons and situations when existing policies or practices do not work (Marshall & Rossman, 1990)

This study provided an in-depth examination of factors which influence special education teachers' career intentions, commitment, and job satisfaction in the MCS. Variables affecting teachers' career plans were identified and discussed. This in-depth exploration provided information

that should assist the MCS in achieving a higher percentage of retention for its special education personnel.

### Data Collection

Teacher interviews were used as the source of data collection in this study. In-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the 60 special educators to gather information regarding experiences that had affected their decisions to remain in or leave special education teaching in the MCS. The teacher interviews were conducted by two graduate assistants who were familiar with qualitative research techniques. Not only had the interviewers participated in previous studies which had employed qualitative methodology and completed coursework in qualitative research, they also participated in extensive training sessions on qualitative interviewing techniques. The training schedule and training session agendas are located in Appendix D and Appendix E.

An interview guide (see Appendix F) was used to structure each interview. The guide consisted of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged for the purpose of taking each respondent through the same questions with essentially the same words. This procedure for data collection was chosen to minimize variation in the questions posed to the interviewees. Using standardized open-ended interviews reduced the possibility of biases that could

occur from having different interviews for different people (Patton, 1980).

The use of the interview guide minimizes interviewer effects. Because of the large number of in-depth interviews conducted, it was necessary to engage two interviewers in the data collection process. To reduce variations in participant responses that might exist because different interviewers ask questions in different ways, the same basic questions were asked of all interviewees minimizing interviewer judgment and biases. Interviewers, however, probed respondents for more information as deemed necessary. For example, floating prompts (e.g., repeating the last words spoken by the respondents) were used to sustain teachers' responses to the interview questions. Planned prompts and probes such as "tell me more about that" and "can you give me an example of that" were also used as needed during the interviews. At the end of each interview, the interviewers were free to pursue related questions and subjects of interest.

Finally, the interview guide permits future evaluation users to see and review the instrumentation used in this study. Evaluators can then more easily replicate this study in new programs and situations, using the same interview instrument with different subjects.

The basic interview guide was guided by the study's original research questions. The questions developed for the interview guide were reviewed by special education teachers and administrators, university personnel (e.g., professors in special education administration, general education administration, and curriculum and instruction), research specialists, and a member of the project's advisory committee. Prior to conducting interviews with MCS special educators, the interview guide was field-tested with 12 special education teachers in Virginia. Revisions were made to the interview guide as needed (e.g., a question was added on how the interviewee became a special education teacher; a question was added that addressed the interviewee's choice of teaching position).

The in-depth interviews with 60 special educators who intended to remain in or leave special education teaching in the MCS were conducted from March 9, 1992 to March 20, 1992. Teachers were given various options for times to participate in the interviews (e.g., during the school day, after school, and on Saturdays) and for places to conduct the interviews (e.g., the teacher's school, Memphis State University, and the interviewers' hotel). The interviews were conducted in a comfortable, non-threatening environment of the teacher's choosing and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each interview was tape-recorded to facilitate

data analyses. However, the interviewers also took notes during the interviews to facilitate probing of topics that needed more clarification or topics that the interviewers wanted to pursue further at the end of the interview.

### Data Analysis

This study primarily employed qualitative research techniques during its data analysis. Cross-interview analysis was used to analyze each of the questions on the interview guide for the three sampled groups. This strategy for analyzing data consisted of grouping answers together to common questions from the various interviews. The standardized interview guide facilitated this process and provided a descriptive analytical framework for data analysis.

The three aspects of data analysis used during the cross-interview analysis were: data reduction, data display, and data interpretation. Each of these aspects of data analysis are discussed in detail below.

Data Reduction. During data reduction, the raw data from the interviews was "sharpened, focussed, simplified, and organized in such a way that 'final' conclusions can be drawn and verified" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 21). As previously mentioned, each of the teacher interviews was tape recorded. The researcher listened to each tape recorded interview and key responses to each question were

written into a summary report. These 60 summaries were then analyzed for recurring topics for each question asked. From these topics, a categorical coding scheme was developed. Patton (1980) describes the process for identifying these categories as "a creative process that requires making carefully considered judgments about what was really significant and meaningful in the data" (Patton, 1980, p. 313). For example, for the question "What are your primary reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching in the MCS?", the following categories emerged: support, work assignment, student factors, work rewards, preparation factors, and personal/change factors.

After the various categories were coded, interviewees' individual responses were coded using the previously developed schema, and the categories were further divided into subcategories. Specific examples and descriptions of problems were highlighted to illustrate the categories.

Data Display. Data display is an "organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 21). After the categories and subcategories were developed, patterns of responses were identified and displayed in tables to help compare similarities and differences in the three sampled groups of MCS special education teachers.



Data Interpretation. During this stage of data analysis, conclusions were drawn from the patterns of responses. Conceptualizations of the study's findings were developed to visually display the analyzed data and assist the researcher in assembling and organizing the information. They also allowed the researcher to more readily formulate themes among the patterns. Verbatim comments from the interviewees were then reviewed and quotes were selected to support and illustrate the themes. This data interpretation process was guided throughout by the original research questions.

To assess differences in mean commitment and job satisfaction scores across the stayer, leaver, and undecided groups, two analyses of variance were completed. Statistically significant differences were found for commitment ( $F = 162.03$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .0001$ ) and job satisfaction ( $F = 17.30$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). Student-Newman-Keuls comparisons revealed that all three teacher groups were significantly different from each other on both commitment and job satisfaction. Stayers had significantly higher commitment and job satisfaction than leavers and undecideds. On the other hand, leavers had significantly lower commitment and job satisfaction than the other two teacher groups.

### **Reliability and Validity of the Study**

Establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research can be complicated by the nature of the data and the research process itself. Because of the complications that arise when attempting to apply reliability to qualitative research in a traditional manner, qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a "fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the liberal consistency across different observations" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 44).

To enhance the reliability of this study several methodological procedures were implemented. First of all, extensive training sessions were conducted for the interviewers prior to data collection. An interview guide was also used to structure each interview. Both of these interventions helped to ensure consistency in questioning and recording data during the teacher interviews.

Precise and thorough descriptions of the data collection and analysis techniques employed in this study were also provided. Identifying how data were collected, examined, and synthesized can assist other researchers in the replication of this study.

This study also used rich, elaborate amounts of raw data to enhance its reliability. For example, direct quotes from interviewees were included to support the research

findings. Multiple teacher examples also helped to increase the study's reliability and illustrate its findings.

Another method that was employed to improve this study's reliability was to mechanically record each of the teacher interviews. Tape recording the interviews not only enhanced the replicability of the study, but it also facilitated the data analysis.

Whereas reliability is concerned with the replicability of a study's findings, validity is concerned with the accuracy of a study's findings (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). In qualitative research, findings can be considered if there is a "fit between what is intended to be studied and what is actually studied" (Stainback & Stainback, 1988, p. 97).

In this study, rigorous techniques for data collection and analysis were employed to increase its validity. Triangulation of data (e.g., use of multiple sources, use of multiple investigators) was used during the study's data collection to strengthen validity. In-depth interviewing was another technique that was implemented to help increase the study's validity.

After the data were collected and analyzed, the findings were further validated through two procedures. First, information contained in the interviewees' summary reports was validated. To accomplish this task, six of the teachers' taped interviews were randomly chosen (i.e., two

each of stayers', leavers', undecideds' taped interviews), and an independent reviewer listened to each taped interview writing a summary report of the information obtained during the interview. Information in the reviewer's summary reports was then compared to information contained in those summary reports previously written by the researcher. An 84.03% agreement was reached regarding information presented in the reviewer's and researcher's summary reports.

The categorization and coding of interviewees' responses was also validated following a similar procedure. Using the previously developed coding scheme, an independent reviewer re-categorized the interviewees' responses to reasons for wanting to remain in and leave special education teaching in MCS. A 94.4% agreement was obtained between the reviewer's and the researcher's categorization of teacher responses.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the qualitative research methods used in this study. The research setting, population and sample, and data collection and analysis procedures were explicitly identified and discussed. A discussion of the study's reliability and validity was also presented.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

This chapter contains findings based on the analyses of face-to-face interviews with MCS special education teachers. These results are organized by topics which correspond to the actual interview questions and include demographic characteristics of the interviewees, how interviewees became special education teachers, factors influencing interviewees' career plans, interviewees' future career plans, actions that MCS could take to make special educators want to stay, and interviewees' desired teaching position. The findings are presented for each teacher group by question, and patterns which emerged from the data are discussed across groups. Verbatim comments are included to support and illustrate the themes.

In most instances, this chapter only identifies the specific number of interviewee responses for broad categories of data which emerged from the various interview questions. This information is included in the overview sections for each question asked of participants. To avoid confusion, terms such as "few, some, and many" are then used to further describe the number of interviewee responses for individual subcategories of data. The exact number of interviewee responses for the subcategories of data can be

found in the expanded tables presented in this chapter and in the Appendix.

At the end of this chapter, conceptualizations of the study's findings are also presented. Conceptual models depicting a profile of the teacher groups (i.e., stayers, leavers, undecideds) and the existing relationships among factors influencing MCS special educators' career plans, commitment, and job satisfaction are included.

#### **Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees**

Prior to each interview, teacher demographic information was gathered for each interviewee from MCS personnel files. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewers verified the previously obtained demographic information by asking questions such as "What exceptionality area do you teach?" and "How many years have you taught in the MCS"? Some demographic information (e.g., degrees held by interviewee, interviewee's number of children, and marital status of interviewee) not available in the personnel files was obtained during the interviews.

Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 contain the following information for interviewees: gender, race, age, marital status, number of children, teaching experience, highest degree earned, service delivery model, teaching assignment, teaching exceptionality area, and grade level. The information is

**Table 1**

**Demographic Information on Interviewees by Group**

| Variable                  | Total<br>(N=60) |       | Stayers<br>(N=20) |       | Leavers<br>(N=20) |       | Undecideds<br>(N=20) |       |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                           | N               | (%)*  | N                 | (%)*  | N                 | (%)*  | N                    | (%)*  |
| <b>Gender</b>             |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| Male                      | 5               | (8%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 2                 | (10%) | 1                    | (5%)  |
| Female                    | 55              | (92%) | 18                | (90%) | 18                | (90%) | 19                   | (95%) |
| <b>Race</b>               |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| Blacks                    | 23              | (38%) | 11                | (55%) | 4                 | (20%) | 8                    | (40%) |
| Whites                    | 37              | (62%) | 9                 | (45%) | 16                | (80%) | 12                   | (60%) |
| <b>Age</b>                |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| 26-30                     | 8               | (13%) | 2                 | (10%) | 2                 | (10%) | 4                    | (20%) |
| 31-35                     | 17              | (28%) | 5                 | (25%) | 7                 | (35%) | 5                    | (25%) |
| 36-40                     | 6               | (10%) | 2                 | (10%) | 3                 | (15%) | 1                    | (5%)  |
| 41-45                     | 10              | (17%) | 3                 | (15%) | 3                 | (15%) | 4                    | (20%) |
| 46-50                     | 9               | (15%) | 3                 | (15%) | 4                 | (20%) | 2                    | (10%) |
| 51-55                     | 6               | (10%) | 2                 | (10%) | 1                 | (5%)  | 3                    | (15%) |
| 56-60                     | 2               | (4%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| Over 60                   | 2               | (4%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 0                 | (0%)  | 0                    | (0%)  |
| <b>Marital Status</b>     |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| Married                   | 34              | (57%) | 7                 | (35%) | 14                | (70%) | 13                   | (65%) |
| Not Married               | 26              | (43%) | 13                | (65%) | 6                 | (30%) | 7                    | (35%) |
| <b>Number of Children</b> |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| 0                         | 21              | (35%) | 10                | (50%) | 6                 | (30%) | 5                    | (25%) |
| 1-2                       | 32              | (53%) | 9                 | (45%) | 12                | (60%) | 11                   | (55%) |
| 3-4                       | 6               | (10%) | 1                 | (5%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 3                    | (15%) |
| More than 4               | 1               | (2%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |

\* Percentages are based on the total number of respondents within each group and total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

**Table 2****Teaching Experience by Group**

| <b>Variable</b>                                       | <b>Total</b> |           | <b>Stayers</b> |           | <b>Leavers</b> |           | <b>Undecideds</b> |           |
|---|--------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
|   | <b>Mean</b>  | <b>SD</b> | <b>Mean</b>    | <b>SD</b> | <b>Mean</b>    | <b>SD</b> | <b>Mean</b>       | <b>SD</b> |
| <b>Years of Special Education Teaching Experience</b> |              |           |                |           |                |           |                   |           |
| Total Special Education Teaching Experience           | 11.88        | 6.18      | 12.00          | 7.46      | 11.90          | 6.03      | 11.75             | 5.15      |
| In Memphis City Schools                               | 9.55         | 6.60      | 10.85          | 7.64      | 7.75           | 6.28      | 10.05             | 5.66      |
| Other Special Education Teaching Experience           | 2.23         | 3.43      | 1.14           | 2.02      | 4.17           | 4.35      | 1.70              | 2.83      |
| <b>Years of Other Teaching Experience</b>             |              |           |                |           |                |           |                   |           |
| Total Other Teaching Experience                       | 1.43         | 3.85      | 2.68           | 6.06      | 0.60           | 1.05      | 1.35              | 2.74      |
| In Memphis City Schools                               | 0.50         | 1.92      | 0.58           | 2.29      | 0.05           | 0.22      | 1.24              | 2.77      |
| Other Teaching Experience                             | 0.91         | 3.44      | 2.11           | 5.82      | 0.55           | 1.05      | 0.11              | 0.32      |



**Table 3**

**Educational Preparation of Interviewees by Group**

| Variable                     | Total<br>(N = 80) |         | Stayers<br>(N = 20) |       | Leavers<br>(N = 20) |        | Undecideds<br>(N = 20) |        |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|
|                              | N                 | (%)     | N                   | (%)   | N                   | (%)    | N                      | (%)    |
| <b>Highest Degree Earned</b> |                   |         |                     |       |                     |        |                        |        |
| Undergraduate Degree         | 19                | (32%)   | 9                   | (47%) | 5                   | (25%)  | 5                      | (25%)  |
| Special Education            | 17                | (88%)   | 7                   | (78%) | 5                   | (100%) | 5                      | (100%) |
| Other                        | 2                 | (11%)   | 2                   | (22%) | 0                   | (0%)   | 0                      | (0%)   |
| Graduate Degree              | 40                | (68%)   | 10                  | (53%) | 15                  | (75%)  | 15                     | (75%)  |
| Special Education            | 33                | (82.5%) | 19                  | (90%) | 13                  | (87%)  | 11                     | (73%)  |
| Other                        | 7                 | (17.5%) | 1                   | (10%) | 2                   | (13%)  | 4                      | (28%)  |

**Table 4**

**Teachers' Assignment by Group**

| <b>Teaching Assignment</b>    | <b>Total<br/>(N=60)<br/>N (%)*</b> | <b>Stayers<br/>(N=20)<br/>N (%)*</b> | <b>Leavers<br/>(N=20)<br/>N (%)*</b> | <b>Undecideds<br/>(N=20)<br/>N (%)*</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Service Delivery Model</b> |                                    |                                      |                                      |   |
| Itinerant                     | 6 (10%)                            | 4 (20%)                              | 1 (5%)                               | 1 (5%)                                  |
| Resource                      | 23 (38%)                           | 7 (35%)                              | 8 (40%)                              | 8 (40%)                                 |
| Self-contained                | 21 (35%)                           | 6 (30%)                              | 6 (30%)                              | 9 (45%)                                 |
| Undetermined                  | 10 (17%)                           | 3 (15%)                              | 5 (25%)                              | 2 (10%)                                 |
| <b>Teaching Areas</b>         |                                    |                                      |                                      |   |
| Blind/Visual Impairments      | 1 (2%)                             | 0 (0%)                               | 0 (0%)                               | 1 (5%)                                  |
| Deaf/Hearing Impairments      | 1 (2%)                             | 1 (5%)                               | 0 (0%)                               | 0 (0%)                                  |
| Developmentally Delayed       | 1 (2%)                             | 0 (0%)                               | 0 (0%)                               | 1 (5%)                                  |
| Emotional Disturbances        | 2 (3%)                             | 1 (5%)                               | 1 (5%)                               | 0 (0%)                                  |
| Learning Disabilities         | 10 (17%)                           | 6 (30%)                              | 2 (11%)                              | 2 (10%)                                 |
| Mental Retardation            | 8 (13%)                            | 3 (15%)                              | 5 (26%)                              | 0 (0%)                                  |
| Multiple Disabilities         | 3 (5%)                             | 6 (30%)                              | 9 (47%)                              | 15 (75%)                                |
| Physical Disabilities         | 1 (2%)                             | 1 (5%)                               | 0 (0%)                               | 0 (0%)                                  |
| Speech Impairments            | 3 (6%)                             | 1 (5%)                               | 2 (11%)                              | 0 (0%)                                  |
| Undetermined                  | 2 (3%)                             | 1 (5%)                               | 1 (5%)                               | 1 (5%)                                  |
| <b>Grade Level</b>            |                                    |                                      |                                      |   |
| Preschool                     | 4 (7%)                             | 1 (5%)                               | 2 (10%)                              | 1 (5%)                                  |
| Elementary                    | 27 (45%)                           | 8 (40%)                              | 8 (40%)                              | 9 (45%)                                 |
| Junior High/Middle School     | 11 (18%)                           | 3 (15%)                              | 4 (20%)                              | 4 (20%)                                 |
| Senior High                   | 11 (18%)                           | 4 (20%)                              | 3 (15%)                              | 4 (20%)                                 |
| Mixed**                       | 9 (15%)                            | 4 (20%)                              | 3 (15%)                              | 2 (10%)                                 |

\* Percentages are based on the total number of respondents within each group and total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

\*\* This designation includes teachers assigned to special schools that cannot be simply classified as being an elementary, middle, or high school grade level.

presented by individual teacher groups and for the total sample.

The interviewees consisted of 5 males and 55 females. Their average age was 41, and they had an average of 12 years special education teaching experience with an average of three years other teaching experience. The race of the interviewees included 23 Blacks and 37 Whites. The majority of both leavers (n = 14; 70%) and undecideds (n = 13; 65%) were married. However, only 35% of the stayers (n = 7) were married. Most interviewees (n = 32; 53%) had either one or two children.

The majority of the interviewees (n = 40; 68%) had obtained graduate degrees with most (n = 33) in the field of special education. More interviewees taught at the elementary level (n = 27; 45%) than at the junior high and senior high level combined (n = 22; 36%). Four of the interviewees taught preschool and nine worked with disabled students at a special school. Half of the interviewees (n = 30; 50%) indicated that they taught in a multi-categorical classroom containing students with a variety of disabilities. The majority of the interviewees also taught in either self-contained (n = 21; 35%) or resource (n = 23; 38%) settings.

### **How Interviewees Became Special Education Teachers**

One of the first questions asked of all the interviewees was "Tell me how you became a special education teacher". An overview of the four major categories of reasons interviewees provided for becoming special education teachers is presented in Table 5. These factors included exposure to special needs populations, attraction to special education teaching, incentives, and influenced by others in education. Some interviewees' responses (n = 13) indicated that they became special educators because they were attracted to teaching in general (e.g., desired to become a teacher, liked working with children, liked school hours). These responses were not included in Table 5 as they did not provide reasons why interviewees specifically chose special education teaching as a career.

Stayers (n = 15; 75%), leavers (n = 13; 65%), and undecideds (n = 10; 50%) identified exposure to special needs populations as the factor which most influenced their decision to become special education teachers. For stayers (n = 8; 40%) and leavers (n = 10; 50%), attraction to special education teaching was the second most important reason for becoming a special educator, while undecideds (n = 6; 30%) less frequently mentioned attraction to special education teaching as a reason for becoming a special educator. Incentives (n = 7; 35%) and influenced by others

**Table 5****Overview of Reasons for Becoming Special Education Teachers**

| Reasons                                      | Total<br>(N=60)    | Stayers<br>(N=20)  | Leavers<br>(N=20)  | Undecideds<br>(N=20) |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
|  | N (%) <sup>*</sup> | N (%) <sup>*</sup> | N (%) <sup>*</sup> | N (%) <sup>*</sup>   |
| I. Exposure to special needs populations     | 38 (63%)           | 15 (75%)           | 13 (65%)           | 10 (50%)             |
| II. Attraction to special education teaching | 24 (40%)           | 8 (40%)            | 10 (50%)           | 6 (30%)              |
| III. Incentives                              | 16 (27%)           | 3 (15%)            | 6 (30%)            | 7 (35%)              |
| IV. Influenced by others in education        | 14 (23%)           | 2 (10%)            | 4 (20%)            | 7 (35%)              |

\* Percentages are based on the total number of respondents within each group and total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

in education (n = 7; 35%) were identified by undecideds as the second most important reason for choosing special education teaching as a career. Approximately twice as many leavers and undecideds mentioned incentives and influenced by others in education as a reason for becoming a special education teacher than stayers.

#### Exposure to Special Needs Populations

As indicated above, all three teacher groups more often mentioned exposure to special needs populations as a reason for becoming a special education teacher than any other factor. Two aspects of exposure to special needs populations were identified by interviewees and included exposure to disabled persons and informational exposure (see Table 6). More teachers indicated exposure to disabled persons as influencing their career decisions to become special educators than informational exposure. Stayers and leavers appeared to receive the most exposure to disabled persons through previous work experiences. One stayer commented:

"While teaching English, I became fascinated that some of the students' minds didn't work the way that others did. I didn't like to see students get behind academically so I decided to work solely with disabled students."

Another leaver stated that she was originally a nurse in a pilot nursing program. One of the patients in her unit was

**Table 6**

**Reasons for Becoming Special Education Teachers**

| Reasons   | Total<br>(N=60) |       | Stayers<br>(N=20) |       | Leavers<br>(N=20) |       | Undecideds<br>(N=20) |       |
|---|-----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|   | N               | (%)*  | N                 | (%)*  | N                 | (%)*  | N                    | (%)*  |
| <b>I. Exposure to Special Needs Populations</b>   |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| <b>A. Exposure to Disabled Persons</b>  |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| 1. Contact with disabled persons through previous work                                      | 15              | (25%) | 5                 | (25%) | 9                 | (45%) | 1                    | (5%)  |
| 2. Had a family member who was disabled   | 7               | (12%) | 1                 | (5%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 4                    | (20%) |
| 3. Exposed to disabled persons within church/community                                      | 4               | (7%)  | 3                 | (15%) | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| 4. Had friends who were disabled  | 2               | (3%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 0                 | (0%)  | 0                    | (0%)  |
| 5. Exposed to disabled persons when in school   | 2               | (3%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| 6. Had a disability   | 1               | (2%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| <b>B. Informational Exposure</b>  |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| 1. Special education college courses  | 10              | (17%) | 6                 | (30%) | 2                 | (10%) | 2                    | (10%) |
| 2. Special education textbooks  | 1               | (2%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| <b>II. Attraction to Special Education Teaching</b>   |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| 1. Attracted to aspects of special education teaching                                       | 12              | (20%) | 5                 | (25%) | 4                 | (20%) | 3                    | (15%) |
| 2. Wanted to work with special needs students   | 10              | (17%) | 1                 | (5%)  | 7                 | (35%) | 2                    | (10%) |
| 3. Felt there was a need for special educators  | 4               | (7%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 1                 | (5%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| 4. Desired to become a special education teacher  | 2               | (3%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| 5. Felt they would be competent as a special educator                                       | 2               | (3%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 2                    | (10%) |
| <b>III. Incentives</b>  |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| <b>A. Job Availability</b>  |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| Grants  | 13              | (22%) | 2                 | (10%) | 5                 | (25%) | 6                    | (30%) |
| <b>B. Other Incentives (e.g., minimal course requirements for special education degree)</b> | 3               | (5%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 1                 | (5%)  | 0                    | (0%)  |
| <b>C. Influenced by Others in Education</b>   | 2               | (3%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| <b>A. Teachers/Professors</b>   | 6               | (10%) | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 5                    | (25%) |
| <b>B. Family</b>  | 4               | (7%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 2                 | (10%) | 0                    | (0%)  |
| <b>C. Friends</b>   | 4               | (7%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 2                    | (10%) |

\* Percentages are based on the total number of respondents within each group and total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

a retarded child, and she became interested in pursuing special education teaching as a career.

Having family members who were disabled provided undecideds with exposure to disabled persons. As one teacher recalled, "I had an uncle with Down Syndrome. Because disabilities had been an ever present part of my life, I decided to become a special education teacher." Another teacher indicated that her own children had difficulties in reading and math when they were in school. She decided to become a special education teacher so that she could "better help" her children learn how to read and do math.

Another undecided shared that her interest in special education teaching "stemmed" from her own childhood. "When I was young, I had visual problems and people made fun of me. I felt that I would be an asset to special education because of my childhood."

#### Attraction to Special Education Teaching

Attraction to special education teaching (e.g., attracted to aspects of special education teaching, wanted to work with special needs students, felt there was a need for special educators, desired to become a special educator, felt they would be competent as a special educator) was also identified by teachers as a reason for becoming special educators. Most interviewees indicated that they were



attracted to various aspects of special education teaching including "small grouping of students", "flexibility", and "one-to-one instruction."

Others were attracted to special education teaching because they wanted to work with special needs students. For example, one interviewee commented that she "had always had a compassion for children and wanted to help children who were not so called 'normal'." Similarly, another leaver stated that she "wanted to help children with shortcomings...who were the underdogs...These children had a special place in my heart."

### Incentives

Various incentives (e.g., job availability, grants) were also given by interviewees as reasons for becoming special educators. More interviewees indicated job availability as contributing to their choice of special education teaching as a career than any other incentive. Lack of jobs in their major area and the availability of jobs in special education positively affected special education teaching as a career choice for some interviewees. For example, one teacher explained that when he first entered the job market, there were no jobs available in his college major and thus, he decided to become a special education teacher. Likewise, another interviewee decided to

major in special education to become "more employable" because there was an oversupply of regular educators.

#### Influenced by Others in Education

Finally, interviewees indicated that others in education (e.g., teachers/professors, family, friends) influenced their decision to become special educators. Influenced by school teachers and college professors were most frequently mentioned as reasons for becoming special educators. However, only leavers indicated that having both family and friends who were educators contributed to their decisions to become special education teachers.

#### **Factors Influencing Interviewees' Career Decisions**

Both stayers and undecideds were asked "What are your primary reasons for wanting to remain in special education teaching in the MCS?" Conversely, leavers and undecideds were asked "What are your primary reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching in the MCS?" As indicated in Table 7, six major categories emerged from the interviewees' responses to reasons for wanting to remain in and leave special education teaching. These included: support, work assignment, student factors, work rewards, preparation factors, personal/change factors, and other. The category, "other", contains factors that were mentioned by only one interviewee and did not constitute a separate

**Table 7**

**Overview of Major Factors Influencing Interviewees' Career Plans**

| Factors                     | Reasons for Staying         |                                | Reasons for Leaving         |                                |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                             | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%)* | Undecideds<br>(N=20)<br>N (%)* | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%)* | Undecideds<br>(N=20)<br>N (%)* |
| I. Support                  | 17 (85%)                    | 15 (75%)                       | 17 (85%)                    | 14 (70%)                       |
| A. Administrative support   | 13 (65%)                    | 12 (60%)                       | 14 (70%)                    | 10 (50%)                       |
| B. Colleague Support        | 12 (60%)                    | 14 (70%)                       | 7 (35%)                     | 6 (30%)                        |
| C. Parent Support           | 2 (10%)                     | 3 (15%)                        | 5 (25%)                     | 4 (20%)                        |
| II. Work Assignment         | 14 (70%)                    | 12 (60%)                       | 19 (95%)                    | 17 (85%)                       |
| A. School Factors           | 8 (40%)                     | 6 (30%)                        | 10 (50%)                    | 3 (15%)                        |
| B. Role-design              | 9 (45%)                     | 6 (30%)                        | 15 (75%)                    | 15 (75%)                       |
| C. Resources                | 0 (0%)                      | 2 (10%)                        | 10 (50%)                    | 9 (45%)                        |
| III. Student Factors        | 15 (75%)                    | 16 (80%)                       | 4 (20%)                     | 2 (10%)                        |
| IV. Work Rewards            | 9 (45%)                     | 9 (45%)                        | 3 (15%)                     | 7 (35%)                        |
| A. Intrinsic Rewards        | 7 (35%)                     | 3 (15%)                        | 4 (20%)                     | 2 (10%)                        |
| B. Extrinsic Rewards        | 3 (15%)                     | 3 (15%)                        | 3 (15%)                     | 7 (35%)                        |
| C. Ancillary Rewards        | 4 (20%)                     | 4 (20%)                        | 0 (0%)                      | 0 (0%)                         |
| V. Preparation Factors      | 1 (5%)                      | 0 (0%)                         | 2 (10%)                     | 1 (5%)                         |
| VI. Personal/Change Factors | 0 (0%)                      | 0 (0%)                         | 4 (20%)                     | 2 (10%)                        |
| VII. Other                  | 3 (15%)                     | 5 (15%)                        | 5 (15%)                     | 1 (5%)                         |
| VIII. Non-categorizable     | 3 (15%)                     | 4 (20%)                        | 4 (20%)                     | 3 (15%)                        |

\* Percentages are based on the number of respondents within each category.

category or sub-category. Some responses were unclear in meaning and determined to be "non-categorizable".

Most of the overall factors were common to both plans to remain in and leave special education teaching in the MCS. For example, support (i.e., administrative, colleague, parent) was a factor that positively and negatively influenced teachers' career decisions. Aspects of administrative support such as providing assistance to teachers and treating teachers like professionals were reasons interviewees gave for wanting to remain in special education teaching. On the other hand, interviewees indicated not receiving administrative assistance and not being treated like a professional as reasons for leaving.

For stayers (S) and undecideds (U), support (S, n = 17; 85%; U, n = 15; 75%) and student factors (S, n = 15, 75%; U, n = 16, 80%) were mentioned more often as a reason for wanting to remain in special education teaching in MCS than any other factors. Furthermore, administrative support (S, n = 13; 65%; U, n = 12, 60%) and colleague support (S, n = 12, 60%; U, n = 14, 70%) were given by stayers and undecideds as reasons for wanting to remain more often than parent support (S, n = 2, 10%; U, n = 3, 15%). Both stayers and undecideds also revealed work assignment (i.e., school factors, role-design, resources) (S, n = 14, 70%; U, n = 12; 60%) and work rewards (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic,

ancillary) (S, n = 9, 45%; U, n = 9, 45%) as reasons to remain in special education teaching in MCS. Only one (5%) stayer mentioned preparation factors as influencing their career intentions.

Leavers (n = 19; 95%) and undecideds (n = 17; 85%) identified work assignment factors as most important to their plans to leave special education teaching in MCS. Support was the second most important reason for leaving for both leavers (n = 17; 85%) and undecideds (n = 14; 70%). These two factors, work assignment and support, were mentioned by at least 70% of teachers in the leaver and undecided groups as reasons for wanting to leave. However, work rewards, specifically extrinsic rewards, were mentioned less frequently as reasons for wanting to leave among leavers (n = 3; 15%) and undecideds (n = 7; 35%). Few leavers and undecideds mentioned student, personal/change, and preparation factors as affecting their career plans.

Support and student factors were given most frequently as reasons for wanting to stay, while work assignment was the most important reason for wanting to leave. For work assignment, role-design factors were mentioned most as reasons for staying and leaving. Several aspects of rewards (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, ancillary rewards) were important to teachers' plans to remain, whereas only extrinsic rewards were indicated as reasons for leaving MCS.

Few teachers identified preparation factors as influencing their intentions to stay or leave. Personal/change factors were only mentioned as reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS.

### Reasons for Staying

A detailed summary of specific reasons for wanting to remain in special education teaching in MCS is provided in Appendix G. This table is organized by the same factors that are presented in Table 7. The bullets (■) in Appendix G represent teacher examples of each of the major categories, and the teacher group who provided the example is indicated by an (X).

This section provides an overview of major patterns that emerged from the stayers' and undecideds' reasons for staying. Specific examples of the reasons for wanting to remain in special education teaching in MCS and direct teacher quotes are provided to illustrate the findings.

Support. As indicated above, administrative and colleague support influenced stayers' and undecideds' reasons for wanting to remain in special education teaching in the MCS more than parent support. Stayers and undecideds identified two major sources of support: central office level support (e.g., special education director, special education supervisor, the Board of Education) and building level support (e.g., principal, assistant principal).

Aspects of administrative support included providing assistance to teachers, establishing and maintaining an effective communication system, treating teachers like professionals, demonstrating an interest in students and faculty, and facilitating staff development.

Providing assistance to teachers (e.g., helps obtain appropriate programming and services for special education students, helps obtain resources, helps with student discipline, helps with parent and teacher problems) was mentioned by more stayers and undecideds as a reason for staying in MCS than any other aspect of administrative support. Comments such as "my supervisor took me under his wing" and "they (special education director and special education supervisor) have not turned a deaf ear to my problems" revealed the importance that these teachers placed on administrative assistance. As one undecided explained, "If I have a problem about anything, I can go to her (principal) in strictest confidence for help. She deals with my problems just like she would regular educators' problems." Similarly, another undecided described her principal as having an "open door policy. I knock, go in to talk with him, and he will help me with my problems. He has never told me to come back later."

Interviewees suggested that administrators can provide assistance to teachers in a variety of ways. One way was by

helping special education teachers obtain appropriate programming and services for their students.

"I had eight reading groups in my class because of the wide range of my students' abilities. My supervisor placed some of my students in another program to make my class more homogeneous," explained one teacher.

Helping obtain programming and services for special education students was the only area of administrative assistance in which central office level support was mentioned more frequently than building level support.

Administrators also assisted stayers and undecideds by helping them obtain resources such as instructional materials and equipment. One stayer remarked that her principal had provided her with additional instructional supplies such as pencils, paper, and crayons. "My principal told me to ask him if there was anything that I needed...Just let him know...It's nice to get what you need," commented this teacher. Similarly, an undecided stated that her "principal will do anything for you. No matter what I want for my class, he'll get it for me." Another stayer explained that she even had access to all of the general education teachers' materials and that "it didn't matter if I'm a special education teacher."

Other ways in which stayers and undecideds indicated that administrators provided assistance to special educators were by helping with student discipline and by helping with parent and teacher problems. For example, one teacher who



is undecided about her career plans felt that she could "depend on" her current supervisor to "help with parent problems. Talk is cheap with some of the other supervisors I've had."

Another aspect of administrative support frequently mentioned by stayers and undecideds was establishing and maintaining an effective communication system (e.g., demonstrates/communicates knowledge of special education, is accessible to teachers). Demonstrating and communicating knowledge of special education and of school roles and responsibilities were identified by interviewees as components of an effective communication system. Several stayers and undecideds indicated that their principal or supervisor was able to communicate knowledge about special education because he or she "was once a special education teacher", and therefore understood the special educator's roles and responsibilities. A beginning special education teacher stated that she appreciated her principal "keeping me informed about district policies. Because I'm new, my principal doesn't want me to be slighted."

The accessibility of administrators was also recognized by stayers and undecideds as contributing to an effective communication system. As one stayer commented:

"My supervisor and director of special education are very accessible to me. If I call either of them with a problem, they return my call immediately and help me find a solution to my problem."

Similarly, another stayer remarked that she enjoyed being able to "talk to the supervisor without going through a chain of command."

Treating teachers like professionals was another aspect of administrative support that affected stayers' and undecideds' decisions to remain in special education teaching. Interviewees identified giving teachers input into decision making/autonomy and communicating confidence and respect to teachers as ways in which administrators treat teachers professionally. For example, stayers and undecideds appeared to enjoy having "flexibility" and "latitude" with their programs. As one stayer commented:

"Because I have input into my program, I've been able to expand my program to meet my students' needs. There are no restraints on me. I know my students' needs, and I'm able to do things to meet their needs."

Another stayer expressed her satisfaction about having autonomy over her program by saying, "My principal turns my program over to me...my principal knows I will get the job done." This teacher also indicated that her principal asked for teachers' opinions and input into decision making. "If he doesn't understand something, he asks me about it. He is not an expert in special education but trusts me to inform him about what is going on." Similarly, one undecided explained:

"My principal gives me autonomy over my classroom and treats me like a professional...My principal just lets us teach. He believes that we know our job and that makes for a relaxed atmosphere."

Other undecideds received "leeway" over their programs from central office level administrators. "My supervisor gives me leeway over my program. She is not there all the time, peeping in and sneaking in to see what I am doing," remarked a teacher who was undecided about her career plans.

The final aspects of administrative support that emerged from the stayers' and undecideds' responses to reasons for remaining in special education teaching were demonstrating an interest in students and faculty and facilitating staff development (e.g., knowledgeably assists and evaluates teachers, provides opportunities for professional growth). For example, one undecided suggested that a "caring" administrator was important to her decision to remain in special education teaching.

"My supervisor cares about me and my students. I have worked with this supervisor for nine years. I was offered another teaching position within MCS, but I turned it down because I would have had a different supervisor," explained this teacher.

Another undecided commented that her principal facilitated staff development by knowledgeably evaluating teachers.

"When my principal does watch me, it's not to be intimidating but to make comments on things I can improve on. This makes me a better teacher."

Colleague support was another dimension of support identified by stayers and undecideds as important to their decisions to remain in special education and included support from general education teachers as well as other special education teachers. Providing assistance to teachers, demonstrating/communicating respect and interest in special education teacher, and helping disabled students be successful within their classrooms were aspects of colleague support that influenced these teachers' career plans.

Stayers and undecideds identified providing assistance to teachers as the aspect of colleague support that most affected their plans to stay. Helping teachers with student discipline problems, with instructional strategies and resources, and with obtaining services for disabled students were examples provided by stayers and undecideds of how colleagues assisted these teachers. As one stayer commented:

"I have a good working relationship with the other special education teachers. We are able to discuss children and resolve problems. One of my colleagues even helped me get glasses for one of my students!"

Stayers and undecideds also indicated that colleagues who communicated respect/interest in special education teachers were supportive of them. These teachers expressed that their colleagues "don't want to exclude us...They always include us." As one stayer explained, "I feel like

I'm an integral part of the faculty. When you're treated inferior, you can't do your best." Similarly, an undecided remarked:

"This is my fifth year at this school, and I have made a lot of friends with the regular education teachers, too...They're interested in me as a person...It's not just business."

Helping students be successful within their classrooms (e.g., allows special education students to be mainstreamed in their classes, adapts and modifies instruction for students) was another way colleagues exhibited support for stayers and undecideds. One teacher who plans to remain in special education teaching stated, "They (general educators) go above and beyond their job and are willing to work with any child so that he will be successful in their classrooms." Another stayer commented that her colleagues "try to structure the learning situation so that my students can learn."

Few stayers and undecideds identified parental support as a reasons for wanting to stay. Cooperating with the teacher and maintaining open communication with the teacher were ways in which parents were supportive of stayers and undecideds.

Student Factors. Stayers and undecideds also revealed various student factors (e.g., enjoys helping students succeed/progress, likes student characteristics, and has feelings of concern/responsibility for students) as reasons

for wanting to remain in special education teaching in MCS. Enjoys helping students succeed and progress was mentioned more frequently by stayers and undecideds as important to their wanting to stay than any other student factors. One stayer shared that her student had "learned to tie his shoe. Things that are simple to us are a big accomplishment to these kids." As another stayer explained:

"I like to bring children up from where they are. It makes me feel wonderful to help children that might otherwise not have been helped...I can find the good in children and turn the wayward children back."

Another stayer expressed her satisfaction over being able to help her students by saying, "...Because I am able to help my students, I feel like this is where I belong...I know that I'm doing something wonderful." One teacher who plans to remain in special education teaching stated, "I believe that I have had input into their (students') lives by helping them find what they're good at...They have a difficult road ahead of them. I like to win them all!"

Similarly, an undecided remarked that she felt "encouraged that I'm making a difference with my students, and that's what it's all about."

One stayer in particular commented that she liked working with disabled students because she could "relate to" them.

"Because I have a disability, I can better understand my students' needs and have a better working relationship with my students. My students are more accepting of my own disability because they have disabilities, too," shared this interviewee.

"Being appreciative of the things done for them" and "showing enthusiasm about their education" were examples of student characteristics that appeared to affect stayer's and undecideds' career plans. Few stayers and undecideds mentioned having feelings of concern and responsibility for their students as a reason for wanting to remain in special education teaching.

Work Assignment. Work assignment factors such as role-design, school factors, and resources were given as reasons for staying by both stayers and undecideds. Role-design factors (e.g., has opportunities for individualization, has flexibility, is not bored, does not have to perform paperwork/non-teaching duties) were identified by stayers and undecideds as the work assignment factor which most influenced their career plans. Having opportunities to individualize instruction for students was mentioned most as a role-design factor which influenced stayers' and undecideds' career plans. As one stayer explained, "Students respond better when they are working individually with me. They are able to demonstrate what they know how to do in a one-to-one situation." Another teacher who plans to remain in special education teaching stated, "I'm able to give my students the individual attention that regular

teachers with 25-30 kids can't always give with a big class."

Having flexibility was another role-design factor that affected stayers' and undecideds' plans to remain in special education teaching in MCS. As one undecided commented, "I can take my class in the direction that it needs to go. I'm not bound by certain pages or time constraints."

Stayers and undecideds identified school factors (e.g., likes school location, has adequate facilities) as reasons for wanting to stay. Working in schools that were near their home and that were located in a safe neighborhood were school location factors that contributed to stayers' and undecideds' career decisions. School facilities that were air conditioned and accessible to disabled persons also positively affected teachers' decisions to remain in special education teaching in MCS.

Work Rewards. Stayers and undecideds indicated various intrinsic, extrinsic, and ancillary rewards similar to those identified by Lortie (1975) as reasons for staying in special education teaching in MCS. Stayers and undecideds more often indicated intrinsic rewards (e.g., having feelings of competence and success, having a love of teaching, being challenged) as influencing their career plans than extrinsic or ancillary rewards. For example, some interviewees indicated that they received "internal



gratification" from their jobs. "It (the job) is self-fulfilling for me, and I push myself to help students succeed," said one stayer. Another stayer remarked, "Special education fulfills my needs. I've always enjoyed helping others who need assistance. It makes me feel better...Maybe I'm influencing a life."

Others stated that their love of teaching made them want to remain a special education teacher. As one undecided commented:

"Some special education teachers will simply babysit their students. It is not in me to do that...Whatever it takes, I do it to get my students to learn...I want to teach them...They are 'special' children."

Some stayers revealed that they enjoyed the challenge of teaching special education. As one teacher explained, "It is a challenge to improve that child- to take the child from inside this world to the outside world."

Stayers and undecideds also identified ancillary and extrinsic rewards as affecting their career plans. Job benefits and salary were types of extrinsic rewards cited by these teachers as reasons for remaining in special education teaching in MCS. Ancillary rewards for stayers and undecideds included enjoying the work hours, enjoying the summer vacation/holidays, and having job security.

### Reasons for Leaving

A detailed summary of specific reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS is provided in

Appendix H. This table is organized by the same factors that are presented in Table 7. The bullets (■) in Appendix H represent teacher examples of the major categories, and the teacher group who provided the example is indicated by an (X).

This section provides an overview of the major patterns that emerged from the leavers' and undecideds' reasons for leaving. Specific examples of the reasons teachers gave for wanting to leave special education teaching in the MCS and direct teacher quotes are provided to illustrate the findings.

Work Assignment. Leavers and undecideds identified work assignment as a reason for wanting to leave more often than any other factor. Work assignment included role-design, resource, and school factors. Aspects of role-design (e.g., paperwork, lack of time, class size/caseload, class mix, non-teaching duties) were more often mentioned as a reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS than any other work assignment factor.

The role-design problem that leavers and undecideds were the most dissatisfied with was paperwork. According to teachers, paperwork was often overwhelming, unnecessary, and inconsistent or constantly changing. Furthermore, paperwork often interfered with teaching responsibilities. Comments such as "the paperwork is out of sight", "the amount of

paperwork is astronomical", and "the paperwork is a waste of time" revealed the frustration that these teachers have experienced regarding paperwork. As one leaver stated, "Record keeping has overtaken us (special education teachers)! I have to teach plus be a secretary and keep records."

Some interviewees felt that much of the paperwork they completed was useless and too time consuming. As one undecided commented, "Some of the paperwork is just a mindless task, and I resent it...No one ever says why it is necessary. It is an irritation to me." Another undecided said in exasperation, "There are 9 million things to fill out. It's just absolutely unbearable. At the end of the school year, you are almost dead from it."

Other leavers and undecideds expressed concern that paperwork was interfering with their teaching. One undecided described trying to balance teaching and paperwork as a "juggling match." "It's like a three ring circus...Some teachers give their students easy work so that they can do their paperwork, but I won't do that," remarked another teacher who was undecided about her career plans. A veteran special education teacher stated that "paperwork seems to be more important than my teaching. This makes me feel burned out and makes me want to leave. I don't want to be full of regrets later in teaching." Similarly, one

leaver stated that "paperwork takes priority over my teaching...Paperwork seems to be more important than the children." Another leaver commented, "You either do good filework or good therapy. It's difficult to do both."

A few leavers and undecideds voiced their dissatisfaction about the inconsistencies that existed with the paperwork. As one leaver said, "I learn how to do the paperwork. They change the forms. I have to relearn them."

Lack of time (e.g., lack of time to perform non-instructional duties, lack of time to perform instructional duties) was another role-design problem that appeared to affect leavers' and undecideds' plans to remain in special education teaching in MCS. For example, some interviewees stated that they did not have time to perform non-instructional duties such as conducting meetings with parents and completing paperwork. As one leaver stated:

"Do I teach or do I allot this time for record keeping?...I get behind on my records, and I go home with this sense of not having completed what I should have completed. It's very stressful."

An undecided also expressed her concern over not having time to complete paperwork by saying, "I can't stop teaching to complete the paperwork...It ends up piling up...So my work day does not end when my students leave." Lesson planning and individualizing student instruction were provided by leavers and undecideds as examples of instructional duties

that they did not have time to perform because of other role demands.

Other role-design factors that leavers and undecideds identified as reasons for wanting to exit special education teaching were class size, caseload, and class mix. Large class sizes and caseloads have affected these teachers' ability to "serve the needs of their students" and their level of job satisfaction. "Because I have so many students in my classes, I feel spread too thin," explained one undecided. "I leave school everyday with the feeling that I didn't get to every kid." As one leaver stated, "With 46 students on my caseload, I can't give the children the services that they need. I'm underserving those children, but I'm still accountable for them." Another concerned leaver remarked:

"Administrators are putting in more and more students. It's hard to watch children not making progress because we can't teach the way we used to (when classes were smaller)...I've seen teachers break their back trying to give students what they were given before. We, the teachers, feel guilty for it and put the blame on ourselves."

Having classes with multiple student age ranges, exceptionality areas, and ability levels was also problematic for leavers and undecideds. "Having all different types of handicaps in one setting is deplorable," stated one leaver. "Teaching becomes an impossible task." Similarly, a teacher who is undecided about her career plans

commented, "I have a potpourri of anything and everything that comes along. Just where there's a slot or a place to stick them in- that's where they're placed."

Resource problems such as inadequate instructional materials/equipment and lack of personnel was another aspect of work assignment that leavers and undecideds indicated as a reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS. One leaver stated that she had even rented a xerox machine to make copies of her students' classwork because she did not have access to a copier at school. Teachers were especially concerned, however, about the inadequacy of the \$50.00 annual allotment they received for purchasing instructional materials. "The 50.00 annual allotment for instructional materials won't even buy paper and pencils, much less speech programs," commented one teacher of the speech impaired who plans to leave special education teaching. Another leaver stated her dissatisfaction with funding for materials by saying, "\$50.00 for 80 kids- that's less than \$1.00 per kid!" As one undecided explained:

"I spend \$50.00 in two weeks just on paper and pencils. I get frustrated because they expect us to individualize instruction, but they don't provide us with the necessary materials."

Because the amount of money allotted for instructional materials was not sufficient, some leavers and undecideds had to spend their own money to purchase supplies and materials. As one leaver remarked, "I have to spend a lot

of money out of my own pocket because \$50.00 doesn't go a long way." One undecided also expressed her dissatisfaction over spending her own money for instructional materials by saying, "I spend approximately \$300.00 annually of my own money for materials. What other choice do I have? I have to have the tools to do what I need to do." Another undecided agreed and said, "We (special education teachers) spend much of our own money, but it makes it easy to teach if I have materials."

Other leavers and undecideds did not have sufficient or appropriate instructional materials and equipment to use with their students. For example, one undecided explained that she did not have enough textbooks for her students. "I have to beg, borrow, and steal to get student textbooks," she exclaimed.

Lack of personnel (e.g., lack of assistants, lack of teachers) was another resource problem that leavers and undecideds indicated as a reason for wanting to leave. One undecided commented that she had a self-contained classroom with 15 students and no assistant. She felt that:

"This could become a dangerous situation at times. If I have to leave my classroom, there is no one minding the store. I don't even have the personal freedom to take a break and go the bathroom!"

Another undecided expressed her dissatisfaction over the assistants' lack of competence and training.

"My aide is not trained to work with special education students," explained this teacher. "She can't even correctly cut out letters for a bulletin board! It takes away time from my class to stop and deal with her."

Some leavers and undecideds identified school factors such as inadequate facilities and poor location as a work assignment problem that contributed to their plans to leave special education teaching in MCS. One teacher who plans to leave special education teaching described her classroom facilities as "inhuman" because she taught in an unventilated closet and in a storage room. Other interviewees felt unsafe in their schools, and one leaver commented that "I fear for my life because I'm telling these students to get to work. They are probably carrying a firearm and could blow my head off!" One undecided explained that she was afraid to stay after school and work because "I'm afraid to walk out to my car." Another leaver felt unsafe at her school because a stray bullet had entered her classroom during a drug deal that had gone awry in a nearby park.

Support. Lack of administrative support was mentioned more often by leavers and undecideds as a reason for wanting to leave than colleague and parent support. Interviewees experienced lack of administrative support at both the central office level (e.g., special education director, special education supervisor, the Board of Education) and building level (e.g., principal, assistant principal).



However, leavers and undecideds revealed that they received less support from central office level administrators than from building level administrators.

There were several ways in which leavers and undecideds indicated that administrators were not supportive of them including not providing assistance to teachers, not establishing and maintaining an effective communication system, not facilitating staff development, and not treating teachers like professionals. Not providing assistance to teachers (e.g., does not help obtain appropriate programming and services for special education students, does not help with student discipline, does not help with teacher transfers, does not help resolve conflicts with other administrators and teachers, does not help with obtaining instructional materials, does not help with reducing teacher's workload) was mentioned most as a reason for wanting to leave. When discussing the lack of administrative assistance she had received, one leaver remarked, "You are pretty much on your own and how you make it is pure survival...If you have survived, you have done it by yourself."

Not helping teachers obtain appropriate programming and services for their students was an important aspect of administrative assistance that was lacking for leavers and undecideds. "I have many students that are inappropriately

placed in my classroom," explained one teacher who plans to leave special education teaching. "My program has become a dumping ground! I'm not respected as a professional- I'm just a classroom to put people in and that is it." One undecided stated that whenever she approached an administrator with a problem concerning programming for her students she was told to "handle it myself."

Some leavers and undecideds expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of administrative assistance with teacher transfers. "There are not many opportunities provided for transferring to another position...You are there for the rest of your life," commented one undecided. One leaver who was involuntarily transferred to an elementary teaching position exclaimed, "I was depressed and cried everyday. I've lost my last amount of enthusiasm."

Another way in which administrators were unsupportive of leavers was by not establishing and maintaining an effective communication system (e.g., does not demonstrate/communicate knowledge of special education, is inaccessible to teacher). For example, some interviewees felt that administrators were not knowledgeable about special educators' roles and responsibilities. As one undecided remarked:

"They (special education administrators and school principal) don't understand what I do. They expect us (special educators) to work miracles with these kids. We're doing our best just to survive from day to day. Just getting these kids to carry their lunch trays is an accomplishment."

Others indicated that administrators did not effectively communicate and implement policies.

"Special education administrators don't communicate with their teachers," stated one leaver. "The administration is the nucleus of the problem. I don't know if they are confused or overwhelmed...The communication is not good with the special education administrators."

A few leavers and undecideds suggested that administrators, more specifically central office level administrators, were inaccessible to teachers and did not have a lot of contact with them. "The supervisor just hires a teacher and puts her out in her class. They leave you out in your school with no support, and it's terrible," stated one undecided.

Not facilitating staff development (e.g., does not knowledgeably evaluate teachers, does not provide opportunities for professional growth) was another aspect of administrative support that leavers and undecideds indicated as a reason for wanting to leave. Some leavers and undecideds revealed that administrators did not knowledgeably evaluate teachers. One undecided stated, "I just need a pat on the back from my boss. I don't get that, but all people need it." Other leavers and undecideds were

dissatisfied with the lack of opportunities administrators provided for professional growth. As one leaver commented:

"Inservices that special education administrators conduct are usually redundant and don't provide me with any new or pertinent information. I could use my time more effectively to do records."

The final aspect of administrative support identified as a reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS by only leavers was not treating teachers as professionals. Leavers expressed concern over lack of respect and lack of opportunities for input into decision making. As one leaver explained, "I feel powerless over change. I don't even have the power to place my students in their least restrictive environment."

Lack of collegial support was also mentioned by leavers and undecideds as a reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS. Aspects of colleague support that contributed to teachers' desires to leave included not helping special education students be successful within their classrooms, not demonstrating/communicating an understanding of special education, and not providing assistance to the special education teacher. For example, some interviewees indicated that special education teachers are "looked down upon" by colleagues and "considered second-class citizens." One leaver added:

"Regular educators resent special education teachers because of our small caseloads...they think we have a lot of free time. I had one regular education teacher tell me that when she died and was reincarnated, she wanted to come back as a special education teacher because we have it so easy!"

Few leavers and undecideds mentioned parent support as a reason for wanting to leave. Examples of lack of parent support for leavers and undecideds included not being actively involved in their child's education and not communicating with the teacher.

Work Rewards. Various work rewards such as extrinsic and intrinsic rewards were identified by leavers and undecideds as reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS. Extrinsic rewards (e.g., inadequate salaries, accrued investments) were mentioned most as influencing these teachers' career intentions. Leavers and undecideds more often indicated salaries as a reason for wanting to leave than accrued investments. Interviewees felt dissatisfied with their salaries because they were too low and were not commensurate with a special educator's job responsibilities. As one undecided explained:

"We (special educators) do more than other teachers and should be compensated for our extra work. We must do everything that regular education teachers must do plus extras."

Another undecided stated that salary had become an issue for her because "of what I have to put up with...This is not an eight hour job."

Intrinsic rewards such as having feelings of ineffectiveness and lacking a challenge were also revealed by leavers and undecideds as reasons for wanting to leave. As one leaver commented, "My teaching is ineffective. What I have to offer my students is diluted. Students don't progress and this discourages me. Other teachers give up, too." Another leaver stated that her ineffectiveness as a teacher had caused her to re-examine her career choice. Some interviewees stated that large class sizes caused them to feel ineffective as a teacher. As one undecided explained:

"It (the large class sizes) impedes my teaching. I have to prioritize what is most important. I feel like I'm short-changing my students who could move faster and pushing my lower level students almost to the point of frustration."

Likewise, another undecided commented that her large class sizes made her feel "ineffective because I feel like I'm not doing my job. I do the best I can do, but I don't like that feeling."

Student Factors. Few leavers and undecideds mentioned student factors (e.g., is unable to help students, dislikes student characteristics) as reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS. Inability to help students was identified by more leavers and undecideds as affecting their career plans than any other student-related factor. "It is pointless to work with students because

nothing you do seems to make a difference," commented one teacher who plans to leave special education teaching.

"Even if I see students progress in my classroom, it seems futile. The little progress they make won't have any lasting change for them anyway." Likewise, an undecided commented:

"I'm not with the students as much as the regular education teachers, and I don't see the students progress very much...I don't receive any positive feedback from the kids...I feel like I'm wasting my time. I'm just treading water. I can see the bank, but I can't get to the bank."

Some leavers and undecideds indicated various student characteristics as contributing to their leaving. "Having students who were disrespectful" and "working with students from low income families" were ways in which student characteristics negatively affected these teachers' plans to leave.

Personal/Change Factors. Personal/change factors were also identified by few leavers and undecideds as a reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS and included needing a change and family reasons. "Needing a change from this teaching position" was mentioned by most leavers and undecideds as affecting their career plans. For example, these teachers expressed desires to pursue an administrative position within MCS or transfer to a regular education teaching position.

One leaver stated that she was planning to leave special education teaching because of personal reasons. She commented that she wanted to "stay home and spend time with her family."

Preparation Factors. Lack of preparation was cited by few leavers and undecideds as a reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS. Not feeling adequately trained to teach instructional skills and not feeling adequately trained to work with parents from different cultures were ways in which leavers and undecideds felt unprepared for their jobs. As one leaver explained, "I don't feel comfortable in my current position. I wasn't adequately trained to teach young children. I don't even know how to teach them to read."

#### **Interviewees' Future Career Plans**

Another question that was asked of all the interviewees was "Tell me about your future career plans." Although interviewees had previously indicated specific intentions related to their current teaching assignment, this question addressed a broader, wider spectrum of interviewees' future career plans. When asked this question, respondents were prompted by interviewers to discuss their career plans for five and ten years from the present time. Therefore, each interviewee gave a number of varied responses. All of the responses are presented in Table 8 to assist the reader in



**Table 8**

**Interviewees' Future Career Plans**

| Future Career Plans                                 | Total<br>(N=60) | Stayers<br>(N=20) | Leavers<br>(N=20) | Undecideds<br>(N=20) |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
|   | N (%)*          | N (%)*            | N (%)*            | N (%)*               |
| <b>I. Remain in Education</b>                       |                 |                   |                   |                      |
| <b>A. Remain in Teaching</b>                        |                 |                   |                   |                      |
| 1. Special education teaching                       | 43 (72%)        | 18 (90%)          | 9 (45%)           | 16 (80%)             |
| 2. Regular education teaching                       | 9 (15%)         | 2 (10%)           | 4 (20%)           | 3 (15%)              |
| 3. Teaching (non-specified)                         | 8 (13%)         | 0 (0%)            | 5 (25%)           | 3 (15%)              |
| 4. Private school teaching                          | 5 (8%)          | 0 (0%)            | 3 (15%)           | 2 (10%)              |
| 5. College teaching                                 | 3 (5%)          | 1 (5%)            | 1 (5%)            | 1 (5%)               |
| <b>B. Transfer to Administrative Position</b>       |                 |                   |                   |                      |
| 1. Special education administration                 | 12 (20%)        | 4 (20%)           | 5 (25%)           | 3 (15%)              |
| 2. Regular education administration                 | 3 (5%)          | 0 (0%)            | 2 (10%)           | 1 (5%)               |
| 3. Administration (non-specified)                   | 1 (2%)          | 0 (0%)            | 0 (0%)            | 1 (5%)               |
| <b>C. Education related (non-specified)</b>         | 3 (5%)          | 1 (5%)            | 1 (5%)            | 1 (5%)               |
| <b>II. Leave Education</b>                          |                 |                   |                   |                      |
| <b>A. Pursue Job in Non-education Related Field</b> | 17 (28%)        | 3 (15%)           | 7 (35%)           | 7 (35%)              |
| <b>B. Remain at Home</b>                            | 9 (15%)         | 0 (0%)            | 6 (30%)           | 3 (15%)              |
| <b>C. Retire</b>                                    | 3 (5%)          | 0 (0%)            | 1 (5%)            | 2 (10%)              |
| <b>III. Unsure of Career Plans</b>                  | 2 (3%)          | 0 (0%)            | 1 (5%)            | 1 (5%)               |

\* Percentages are based on the total number of respondents within each group and total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

identifying the major categories of responses and how many teachers gave responses within a particular category. The major categories that emerged from the data included remain in education, leave education, and unsure of career plans.

#### Remain in Education

All three teacher groups more often indicated that they planned to remain in education than leave education or were unsure of their career plans. Teachers' plans to remain in education included remaining in teaching, transferring to an administrative position, and working in education (non-specified). Not only did most teachers plan to remain in education but in special education teaching as well.

Comments such as "I want to stay with this job until I die" and "I plan to remain in this job indefinitely" suggest that most stayers are very satisfied with special education teaching as a career. However, a few of the stayers did reveal plans to pursue careers in general education and college teaching. Several stayers remarked that they would like to remain in education but not in teaching. Instead, they planned to transfer to a special education administrative position. One teacher stated that she wanted to become an administrator "to implement strategies which will better retain special education teachers."

Leavers also mentioned more frequently that they intended to remain in education as special education

teachers. "Job security", "enjoyment in working with disabled students", and "accrued investments" were provided by leavers as influencing their career plans to remain in special education teaching. Other teaching plans identified by leavers included regular education teaching, private school teaching, and college teaching.

Some of the leavers revealed that even though they planned to remain in education, they wanted to transfer to an administrative position with most preferring special education administration as opposed to regular education administration. These leavers commented that they could "make more of a difference" and "see more productive results" as an administrator.

Like stayers and leavers, the majority of the undecideds indicated that they planned to remain in education and teach special needs students. One undecided stated that she intended to remain in special education teaching "until retirement." Some of the leavers also revealed intentions to pursue careers in regular education teaching, private school teaching, and college teaching.

#### Leave Education

Leavers and undecideds accounted for most of interviewees' plans to leave education which included pursuing a job in a non-education related field, remaining at home, and retiring. Of those few stayers who indicated

plans to leave education, all of them wanted to pursue a job in a non-education related field (e.g., owner of a day care center, insurance salesman, and dental hygienist). Some leavers and undecideds also expressed intentions to seek non-education related careers. One leaver stated that she wanted to go into the "business field" where she would have "more control over her situation." Another leaver expressed a desire to become a "missionary. I do not see myself remaining in teaching until retirement. I need a change every five years." Other careers that leavers were interested in pursuing included real estate law and owning a private business.

Undecideds indicated a variety of non-education related career options that they were interested in pursuing including working in a flower shop, owning a day care center, working in real estate, and working with the elderly. One teacher stated that she simply wanted to be in "a professional setting where people that I work with understand me, where the pay is better, and where I can work at my own pace." Another teacher also expressed dissatisfaction over special educators' working conditions and commented that:

"I would work on an assembly line in a factory for more pay. I wouldn't have to deal with the paperwork problems. There would be little stress, and I could leave my problems at work."

Some leavers and undecideds were also planning to leave education to remain at home (e.g., spending time with a spouse, raising children) and to retire. As one teacher stated, "I plan to stay at home and develop my social and personal life more fully. I can't see spending my middle age doing paperwork."

#### Unsure of Career Plans

Only two of the interviewees indicated that they were unsure of their career plans. Only one leaver and one undecided revealed some indecision about their career plans.

While proceeding with all of the aforementioned career plans, interviewees identified several other activities that they were planning to pursue. Many of the interviewees (n = 16) intended to return to college and seek graduate degrees. Interviewees commented that obtaining a graduate degree would help them to "better themselves" and "become more qualified to work with disabled students." A few (n = 3) of the stayers and leavers also expressed intentions to obtain additional special education certification and to participate in the MCS career ladder program.

#### **Actions That MCS Could Take to Make Teachers Want to Stay**

To determine what actions MCS could take to make special educators want to remain in special education teaching, leavers and undecideds were asked "What could MCS do to make you decide to stay in special education

teaching?" This section provides a synthesis of leavers' and undecideds' responses to actions that MCS could take to make them want to stay. An overview of the actions is presented in Table 9 to identify the number of teachers who gave responses within a particular category. The major categories of responses to actions that could make special educators want to stay included work assignment, administrative support, and extrinsic rewards.

Most of the leavers recommendations for improvements were in the categories, work assignment (n = 12; 60%) and administrative support (n = 13; 65%). For undecideds, more teachers mentioned work assignment (n = 17; 85%) as an area needing improvement than administrative support (n = 12; 60%). Extrinsic rewards were mentioned less frequently by leavers (n = 6; 30%) and undecideds (n = 7; 35%) as an area in which MCS could take actions.

#### Work Assignment

Overall, leavers and undecideds more often mentioned improvements in work assignment (e.g., role-design, resources, school factors) than any other area as actions that MCS could take to make them want to remain. For example, leavers and undecideds indicated various role-design problems such as paperwork, class size/caseload, class mix, and non-teaching duties as areas needing

**Table 9****Overview of Actions that MCS Could Take to Make Special Educators Want to Stay In Special Education Teaching in the MCS**

| <b>Factors</b>             | <b>Total<br/>(N=40)<br/>N (%)*</b> | <b>Leavers<br/>(N=20)<br/>N (%)*</b> | <b>Undecideds<br/>(N=20)<br/>N (%)*</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| I. Work Assignment         | 29 (73%)                           | 12 (60%)                             | 17 (85%)                                |
| A. Role-design             | 25 (63%)                           | 11 (55%)                             | 14 (70%)                                |
| B. Resources               | 23 (58%)                           | 9 (45%)                              | 14 (70%)                                |
| C. School                  | 4 (10%)                            | 3 (15%)                              | 1 (5%)                                  |
| II. Administrative Support | 25 (63%)                           | 13 (65%)                             | 12 (60%)                                |
| III. Extrinsic Rewards     | 13 (33%)                           | 6 (30%)                              | 7 (35%)                                 |

\* Percentages are based on the total number of respondents within each group and total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

improvement (see Table 10). Reducing excess paperwork and providing clerical help for paperwork were mentioned more often by teachers as strategies that MCS could implement to improve the paperwork issue for special educators. To help reduce large class sizes and large caseloads, leavers and undecideds recommended that MCS reduce the number of students per class and establish guidelines for maximum class size and caseload.

Resource problems were another aspect of work conditions that leavers and undecideds felt could be improved upon. To help reduce the inadequacy of instructional materials and equipment, leavers and undecideds most often suggested that MCS increase teachers' allotment for instructional materials and provide special educators with the resources to meet their needs. Provide full-time assistants for special education teachers, hire competent administrators at all levels, and establish a parent liaison position were actions identified by both teacher groups that MCS could take to alleviate personnel resource problems.

Finally, there were several recommendations that leavers and undecideds provided for coping with school-related problems. These recommendations included renovating school facilities, renovating school grounds, and providing special educators with adequate classroom space.



**Table 10**

**Actions that MCS Could Take to Make Special Educators Want to Stay in Special Education Teaching in the MCS**

| Factors  | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%)* | Undecideds<br>(N=20)<br>N (%)* |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I. Work Assignment   |                             |                                |
| A. Role-design   |                             |                                |
| 1. Paperwork   |                             |                                |
| • reduce excess paperwork  | 4 (20%)                     | 6 (30%)                        |
| • develop a computerized system for completing IEPs and IEP inserts                | 2 (10%)                     | 3 (15%)                        |
| • provide clerical help for completing paperwork                                   | 2 (10%)                     | 2 (10%)                        |
| • provide workdays for completing paperwork  | 1 (5%)                      | 1 (5%)                         |
| • provide a planning period for completing paperwork                               | 2 (10%)                     | 0 (0%)                         |
| 2. Class size/caseload   |                             |                                |
| • reduce the number of students per class  | 4 (20%)                     | 6 (30%)                        |
| • establish guidelines for maximum class size and caseload                         | 5 (25%)                     | 5 (25%)                        |
| B. Resources   |                             |                                |
| 1. Instructional materials and equipment   |                             |                                |
| • increase teachers' annual allotment for instructional materials                  | 5 (25%)                     | 4 (20%)                        |
| • provide special educators with the resources to meet their needs                 | 1 (5%)                      | 6 (30%)                        |
| • allow teachers to accumulate money from year to year for instructional materials | 1 (5%)                      | 0 (0%)                         |
| • disperse the curriculum lab materials among special educators                    | 0 (0%)                      | 1 (5%)                         |
| 2. Personnel   |                             |                                |
| • provide full-time assistants for special education teachers                      | 1 (5%)                      | 4 (20%)                        |
| • hire competent administrators at all levels                                      | 1 (5%)                      | 2 (10%)                        |
| • establish a parent liaison position  | 1 (5%)                      | 0 (0%)                         |
| C. School Factors  |                             |                                |
| • provide special educators with adequate classroom space                          | 3 (15%)                     | 0 (0%)                         |
| • renovate school facilities   | 1 (5%)                      | 1 (5%)                         |
| • renovate school grounds  | 1 (5%)                      | 0 (0%)                         |

Table 10 (continued)

| Factors   | Leavers          | Undecideds       |
|---|------------------|------------------|
|   | (N=20)<br>N (%)* | (N=20)<br>N (%)* |
| <b>II. Administrative Support</b>   |                  |                  |
| <b>A. Effective communication system</b>  |                  |                  |
| • hire knowledgeable and adequately trained supervisors   | 2 (10%)          | 1 (5%)           |
| • provide immediate responses to teachers' concerns   | 1 (5%)           | 2 (10%)          |
| • have weekly contact with special education teachers   | 1 (5%)           | 2 (10%)          |
| • provide teachers with information on appropriate instructional tools to use with disabled students  | 1 (5%)           | 2 (10%)          |
| • provide opportunities for supervisors and the Board of Education to spend time in teachers' classrooms to develop a better understanding of special educators' roles and responsibilities | 1 (5%)           | 0 (0%)           |
| <b>B. Staff development</b>   |                  |                  |
| • conduct inservices that meet special educators' needs   | 4 (20%)          | 2 (10%)          |
| • provide inservices for school principals and general education teachers that explain the special educators' roles and responsibilities  | 2 (10%)          | 2 (10%)          |
| • provide more individual feedback to teachers  | 1 (5%)           | 1 (5%)           |
| <b>C. Student-related</b>   |                  |                  |
| • obtain more support services for special education students   | 1 (5%)           | 5 (25%)          |
| • develop more effective policies for dealing with student discipline   | 1 (5%)           | 3 (15%)          |
| <b>D. Treat teachers as professionals</b>   |                  |                  |
| • allow teacher input into decisionmaking   | 2 (10%)          | 3 (15%)          |
| • listen to teachers  | 1 (5%)           | 2 (10%)          |

**Table 10 (continued)**

| <b>Factors</b>   | <b>Leavers</b> | <b>Undecideds</b> |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
|  | <b>(N=20)</b>  | <b>(N=20)</b>     |
|  | <b>N (%)*</b>  | <b>N (%)*</b>     |
| <b>E. Teacher transfers</b>  |                |                   |
| • provide more opportunities for teacher transfers                           | 4 (20%)        | 1 (5%)            |
| • make an effort to place teachers in teaching positions that have requested | 0 (0%)         | 1 (5%)            |
| <b>III. Extrinsic Rewards</b>  |                |                   |
| • increase teachers' salaries  | 3 (15%)        | 5 (25%)           |
| • provide salary incentives  | 3 (15%)        | 3 (15%)           |
| • provide options for teachers to work extra hours                           | 1 (5%)         | 0 (0%)            |

\* Percentages are based on the total number of respondents within each group and total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

### Administrative Support

Leavers' and undecideds' suggestions for increasing the amount of support they received related to administrative support (e.g., establishing and maintaining an effective communication system, facilitating staff development, dealing with student-related issues, treating teachers as professionals, providing opportunities for teacher transfers). Leavers and undecideds most often provided recommendations for actions that could be taken to establish and maintain an effective communication system with special educators and to facilitate staff development. For example, teachers recommended hiring knowledgeable and adequately trained supervisors and providing immediate responses to teachers' concerns as ways to establish and maintain an effective communication system. To facilitate staff development, leavers and undecideds suggested that administrators conduct inservices that meet special educators' needs and provide inservices for school principals and general education teachers that explain the special educator's roles and responsibilities.

### Extrinsic Rewards

The only aspect of rewards in which leavers and undecideds identified actions that MCS could take to make them want to remain in special education teaching was extrinsic rewards, specifically salary. Leavers and

undecideds made several suggestions regarding teacher salaries including provide salary incentives for special educators, increase teachers' salaries, and provide options for teachers to work extra hours.

### No Actions

There were some interviewees (n = 4; 20%) who indicated that there was nothing that MCS could do to make them stay in special education teaching. All of these respondents were special educators who were planning to leave their special education teaching positions. As one leaver emphasized, "They (MCS) couldn't do anything for me to make me want to stay...I'm not valued. I'm just a social security number."

### **Interviewees' Desired Teaching Position**

The final question asked of all interviewees was "If you could have any teaching position, what position would it be? For what reasons?" As indicated in Table 11, three major categories emerged from interviewees' responses to their choice of teaching position. They included current teaching position, transfer to another teaching position, and no teaching position.

Both stayers (n = 17; 85%) and undecideds (n = 13; 65%) more often identified their current teaching position as their choice of teaching position than any other teaching position. As expected, only seven (35%) leavers chose their

**Table 11**

**Teaching Positions Desired by Interviewees**

| Desired Teaching Position   | Total<br>(N=60) |       | Stayers<br>(N=20) |       | Leavers<br>(N=20) |       | Undecideds<br>(N=20) |       |
|---|-----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|   | N               | (%)*  | N                 | (%)*  | N                 | (%)*  | N                    | (%)*  |
| <b>I. Current Teaching Position</b>                                     |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| A. Current Teaching Position  | 25              | (42%) | 15                | (75%) | 2                 | (10%) | 8                    | (40%) |
| B. Current Teaching Position<br>but with Improved Working<br>Conditions | 12              | (20%) | 2                 | (10%) | 5                 | (25%) | 5                    | (25%) |
| <b>II. Transfer to Another Teaching Position</b>                        |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| <b>A. Regular Education Teaching</b>                                    |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| 1. Outside of MCS   | 1               | (2%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 0                    | (0%)  |
| 2. Non-specified  | 8               | (13%) | 1                 | (5%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 5                    | (25%) |
| <b>B. Special Education Teaching</b>                                    |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| 1. In MCS   | 6               | (10%) | 1                 | (5%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 3                    | (15%) |
| 2. Outside of MCS   | 1               | (2%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 0                    | (0%)  |
| 3. Non-specified  | 2               | (3%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 1                 | (5%)  | 0                    | (0%)  |
| <b>C. Teaching Outside the Public Schools</b>                           |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
| 1. Private school/center  | 2               | (3%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 2                 | (10%) | 0                    | (0%)  |
| 2. College setting  | 1               | (2%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 1                    | (5%)  |
| <b>III. No Teaching Position</b>  |                 |       |                   |       |                   |       |                      |       |
|   | 4               | (7%)  | 0                 | (0%)  | 4                 | (20%) | 0                    | (0%)  |

\* Percentages are based on the total number of respondents within each group and total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

current teaching position as their choice of teaching position. On the other hand, leavers (n = 9; 45%) mentioned transferring to another teaching position most frequently as their choice of teaching position, while stayers (n = 3; 15%) and undecideds (n = 9; 45%) less frequently mentioned transferring to another teaching position as their choice of teaching position. Leavers (n = 4; 20%) were the only interviewees who indicated that, at this time, there was no teaching position that appealed to them.

#### Current Teaching Position

As indicated above, most interviewees revealed that their choice of teaching position was their current teaching position. Statements such as "my ideal teaching position is the one I have now" and "I would really love to stay here in this position...I would not change" indicated that stayers were very satisfied with and committed to their current teaching positions. Two of these stayers, however, commented that they would choose their current teaching position again but only with improved working conditions. These teachers felt that "a larger classroom" and "a classroom with a time-out booth, new toys, and new furniture" would make their current jobs even more appealing.

Some undecideds suggested that they also preferred their current teaching position with and without improved

working conditions. Smaller caseloads, less paperwork, more assistants, and higher salaries were suggestions that undecideds provided for improving their current work conditions.

Few of the leavers identified their current position as their choice of teaching position. Five of the leavers indicated that their current position would only be their choice of teaching position if improvements were made in the working conditions. Leavers, like undecideds, stated that higher salaries and smaller caseloads would enhance their work conditions. Other factors such as adequate materials and accessible classrooms were considerations for these teachers when choosing their teaching position.

#### Transfer to Another Teaching Position

Some of the interviewees revealed a desire to transfer to another teaching position (e.g., regular education teaching, special education teaching, teaching outside the public schools). Transfers to general education teaching and transfers to another special education teaching position were most frequently mentioned by interviewees. However, only three stayers expressed transfers to another teaching position as desirable with two of those wanting transfers to another special education teaching position.

On the other hand, more undecideds indicated that they preferred another teaching position. Some felt that



teaching regular education would be less "stressful". For one teacher, the "stress of completing paperwork" was contributing to her "job dissatisfaction." Another undecided expressed:

"My first love is regular education teaching. The students progress at a faster rate and I wouldn't have to repeat lessons so many times. It takes a lot of patience to teach special education."

Several of the undecideds desired a transfer to another special education teaching position at a different school or at a different level (e.g., elementary, high school). One undecided wanted to teach outside the public schools in a college setting.

Leavers selected transferring to another teaching position more frequently than any other teaching position and preferred transferring to a special education teaching position over a regular education position or teaching outside of the public schools. Reasons that leavers gave for wanting to transfer to another special education teaching position included "teaching in a school that is closer to home" and "teaching LD students at a different level, that is at the high school level." Transferring to a regular education teaching position appealed to some leavers because they wanted to work with higher functioning students who were motivated to learn. One teacher also felt that in a regular education teaching position, the parents would be more involved in their child's education and there would be

less paperwork to complete. Two leavers wanted to teach outside the public schools in a private school setting or in a developmental center. "In a private school, I would have smaller class sizes and more instructional materials," commented one of the leavers.

#### No Teaching Position

A few of the leavers indicated that, at this time, there was no teaching position that appealed to them. One teacher who plans to leave special education teaching in MCS concluded her interview by saying, "There is not an ideal teaching situation for me at this point."

#### **Follow-up Examination of MCS Special Educators' Career Plans**

At the beginning of the 1992-93 school year, a follow-up examination of the interviewees was conducted to determine how many had actually left their 1991-92 special education teaching positions in MCS. Three (15%) of those special educators who had indicated plans to leave had actually exited special education teaching in MCS. One (5%) undecided and one (5%) stayer had also left their MCS special education teaching positions.

#### **Conceptualization of Findings**

This section contains two conceptual models which synthesize the study's findings and provide a visual representation of factors influencing MCS special educators' career intentions, commitment, and job satisfaction. The

models pictorially display characteristics of each teacher group (i.e., stayers, leavers, undecideds), factors influencing teachers' career plans, and the relationship of these factors. The development of the models is based on the number of interviewee responses and the strength of the interviewees' comments. Demographic variables are not included in the models as influencing factors due to the extremeness of the teacher groups.

### Synthesis of Findings

As indicated in Figure 2, job-related factors (i.e., support, work assignment, student factors, work rewards) appear to be significant influences on MCS special educators' career plans, commitment, and job satisfaction. Further examination of these job-related factors place stayers, leavers, and undecideds on a continuum with teachers encountering varying degrees of these job-related factors. For example, leavers are located at the lower end of the continuum and represent those special educators who are uncommitted, dissatisfied, and plan to leave special education teaching in MCS. Teachers in the leaver group indicated experiencing low support, undesirable work assignments, unfavorable student factors, and few work rewards.

On the other hand, stayers are characterized as committed, satisfied, and having intentions to remain in

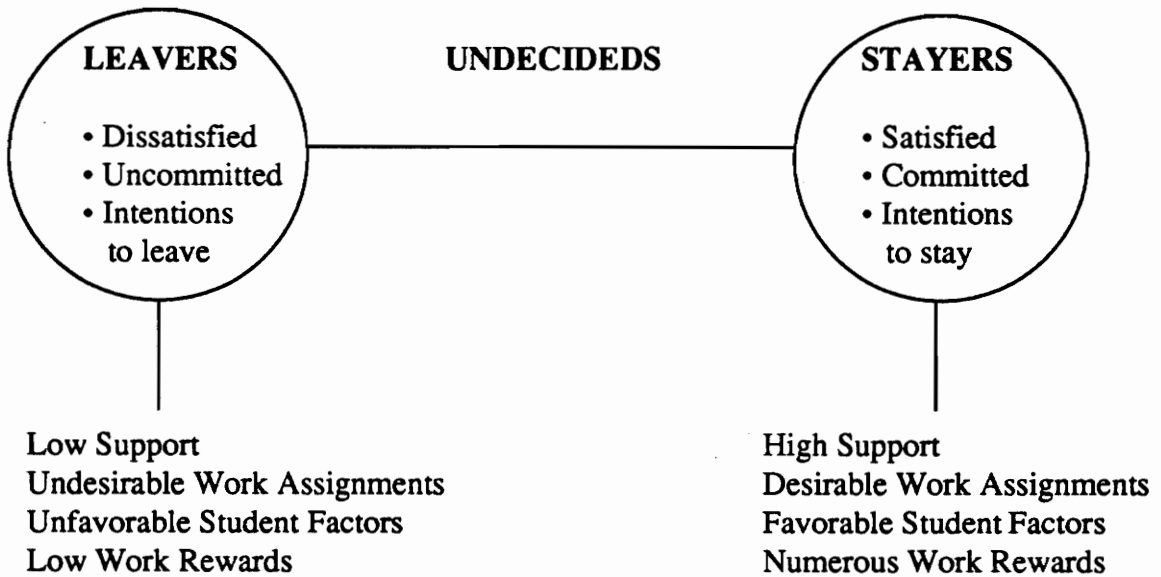


Figure 2. A Conceptualization of Teacher Groups.

special education teaching in MCS. These special educators are located at the upper end of the continuum and expressed that they encountered high support, desirable work assignments, favorable student factors, and numerous work rewards.

Undecideds fall somewhere on the continuum between leavers and stayers. Special education teachers who are undecided about their career plans are both satisfied and dissatisfied with various aspects of their jobs. For example, some undecideds received high levels of support from administrators, colleagues, and parents; whereas, other undecideds revealed that they received low levels of support.

#### Conceptualization of Influencing Factors

Figure 3 suggests that various relationships exist among the job-related factors which influence MCS special educators' career plans, commitment, and job satisfaction. Support emerged as a factor which either directly or indirectly influenced other job-related factors. For example, support (e.g., administrative support) directly affected aspects of special educators' work assignment such as role-design and resources while indirectly affecting student factors (e.g., teachers' ability to help students). Furthermore, support, work assignment, and student factors

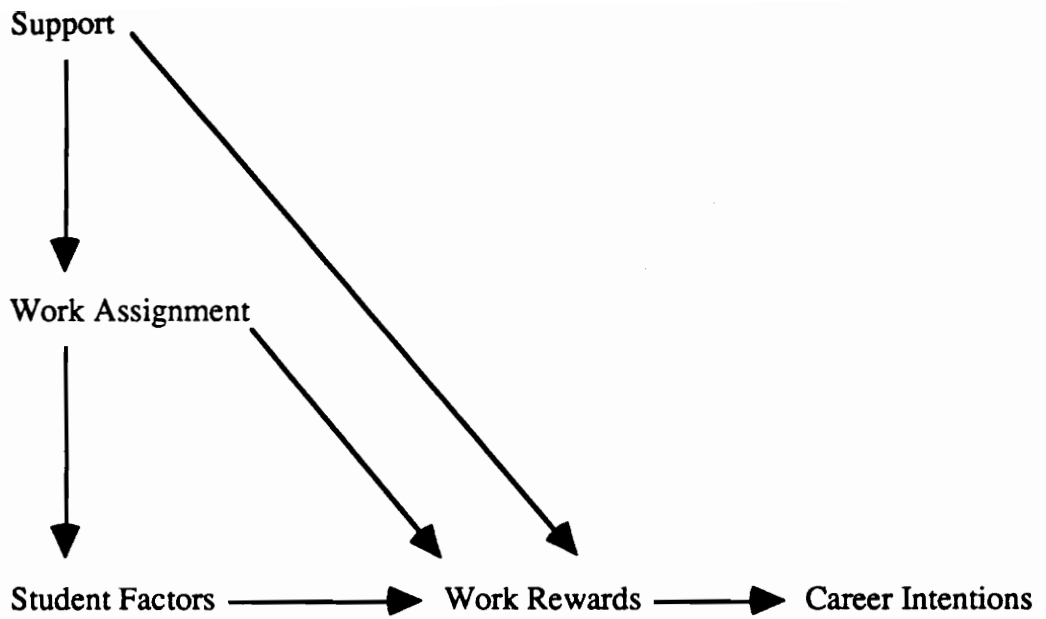


Figure 3. A conceptualization of job-related factors influencing special educators' career intentions.

all directly influenced work rewards and subsequently career intentions.

### **Summary**

This chapter contained the results of data gathered from 60 face-to-face interviews with MCS special education teachers. The findings included demographic characteristics of the interviewees, how interviewees became special educators, factors influencing interviewees' career plans, interviewees' future career plans, actions that MCS could take to make special educators want to stay, and interviewees' desired teaching positions. At the end of the chapter, conceptualizations of the teacher groups (i.e., stayers, leavers, undecideds) and factors influencing their career intentions were presented.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the influences of special education teachers' career plans, commitment, and job satisfaction. This section contains a summary and discussion of the study's findings. First, a brief summary of the findings are presented for each question asked of the interviewees. The study's findings are then discussed including implications for MCS administrators.

#### Summary of Findings

##### How Interviewees Became Special Education Teachers

Four major reasons for becoming special education teachers emerged from interviewees' responses and included exposure to special needs populations, attraction to special education teaching, incentives, and influenced by others in education. All three teacher groups (i.e., stayers, leavers, undecideds) identified exposure to special needs populations as a reason for becoming a special education teacher more often than any other factor. Furthermore, interviewees indicated that their exposure to disabled persons more often affected their decision to become special educators than informational exposure (e.g., special education college courses, special education textbooks).



Attraction to special education teaching was mentioned by stayers and leavers as the second most important reason for becoming special education teachers, whereas incentives and influenced by others in education was more important to undecideds' decisions to become special educators. Few stayers and leavers mentioned incentives and influenced by others in education as reasons for becoming special educators.

#### Factors Influencing Interviewees' Career Plans

The findings from this study revealed that six overall factors influenced MCS special educators' career plans. They were support (i.e., administrative, collegial, parental), work assignment (i.e., school factors, role-design, resources), work rewards (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, ancillary), student factors, preparation factors, and personal/change factors. The first four factors are clearly job-related and account for most of the interviewees' reasons for wanting to remain in and leave special education teaching in MCS.

These job-related factors positively and negatively influenced MCS special educators' career intentions, commitment, and job satisfaction. For example, administrative support was given as a reason for wanting to stay in and leave special education teaching. Positive aspects of administrative support such as providing

assistance to teachers and being available to teachers were identified as reasons for staying, while lack of assistance to teachers and inavailability negatively affected respondents' career plans.

Interviewees indicated that some factors were more important to remaining in special education teaching, while others were more important to leaving special education teaching. Support was more often mentioned as a reason for wanting to stay than any other factor. The next most important reason for wanting to stay was student factors, followed by work assignment and work rewards. Reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS clustered around two major factors, work assignment and support. The other four factors were mentioned by relatively small percentages of leavers and undecideds as reasons for wanting to leave.

At least 70% of all three teacher groups identified support as important to their plans to stay or leave. Although administrative support was mentioned as a reason for leaving more frequently than colleague or parent support, colleague and administrative support were mentioned almost equally as reasons for staying. Teachers who intend to leave special education teaching in MCS also indicated that they received less support from central office level administrators than they did from their principals.

Work assignment was another dominant factor identified by interviewees as a reason for wanting to stay and leave. Almost every leaver and undecided indicated problems with work assignment (i.e., role-design, school factors, resources) as reasons for wanting to leave. Role-design was more often mentioned as reasons for wanting to stay and leave than school factors or resources. Furthermore, leavers and undecideds expressed the most concern over various role-design factors such as paperwork, lack of time, class size/caseload, class mix, and non-teaching duties.

Interviewees also identified work rewards such as intrinsic, extrinsic, and ancillary rewards as affecting their plans to stay in and leave special education teaching in MCS. Various intrinsic rewards were more often mentioned as reasons for staying than extrinsic and ancillary rewards, whereas extrinsic rewards contributed more to teachers' intentions to leave.

Various student factors were important to interviewees' plans to remain in special education teaching in MCS but were mentioned by relatively few leavers and undecideds as reasons for wanting to leave. Student factors which positively affected interviewees' career plans included enjoys helping students succeed/progress, likes student characteristics, and has feelings of concern/responsibility for students. Helping students succeed and progress

influenced interviewees' plans to stay more than any other student-related factor.

#### Interviewees' Future Career Plans

Future career plans for interviewees included remain in education, leave education, and unsure of career plans. The majority of the interviewees' responses indicated that they planned to remain in education with most planning to remain in teaching as well. As expected, responses from leavers and undecideds accounted for 90% of interviewees' plans to leave education. Only two of the interviewees (i.e., one leaver and one undecided) revealed indecision about their future career plans.

#### Actions That MCS Could Take to Make Teachers Want to Stay

Leavers and undecideds identified three areas that MCS could improve to make teachers want to stay in special education teaching. These areas included work assignment (i.e., role-design, resources, school factors), administrative support (i.e., effective communication system, staff development, student-related, treat teachers as professionals, teacher transfers), and extrinsic rewards. For leavers, more recommendations for improvement were made in work assignment and administrative support than in extrinsic rewards. Undecideds more often mentioned work assignment as an area needing improvement than administrative support or extrinsic rewards.

### Interviewees' Desired Teaching Position

When asked about their most desired teaching position, interviewees' responses fell into the following categories: current teaching position, transfer to another teaching position, and no teaching position. Almost all of the interviewees' responses indicated their current teaching position or a transfer to another teaching position as their desired teaching position. Some interviewees mentioned that they would choose their current teaching position only if improvements were made in their work conditions (e.g., smaller caseloads, adequate materials). Others revealed that they preferred to transfer to a regular education teaching position or to another special education teaching position. Leavers were the only interviewees who indicated that, at the time of the interview, there was no teaching position that appealed to them.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Past teacher attrition/retention studies primarily used forced-item surveys and questionnaires to identify factors contributing to special educators' career decisions. Because of this, limitations and restrictions were placed on teachers' responses. This study differs from previous research in that it provides an examination of factors influencing special educators' career plans to remain in and leave special education teaching from the teachers'

perspective. By conducting face-to-face interviews and asking open-ended questions, this study allows interviewees to express in their own words why they intended to remain in or leave special education teaching.

In addition, this study builds on previous research findings by elaborating and further defining a variety of attrition factors such as administrative support and paperwork. Specific examples and verbatim teacher quotes help to clarify and further explain aspects of these factors that interviewees identified as reasons for wanting to leave. For example, previous research studies (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1992; Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Platt & Olson, 1990) indicated that special educators cited excessive paperwork as a primary reason for leaving special education teaching. This study provides more insight into what was meant by excessive paperwork as interviewees further described paperwork as overwhelming, unnecessary, interfering with teaching, and inconsistent.

According to interviewees, many different aspects of their job influenced their career intentions. The four major reasons for wanting to remain in and leave special education teaching in MCS clustered around the following job-related factors: support, work assignment, student factors, and work rewards. Interviewees revealed that

support, particularly administrative support, was a key factor influencing their plans to remain in and leave special education teaching in MCS. Clearly, working in a supportive environment was important to these teachers' career plans. Lack of administrative support has been related to teacher attrition and plans to leave in previous studies (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Metzke, 1988; Platt & Olson, 1990). Further, teachers who intend to leave special education teaching in MCS indicated that they received less support from central office level administrators than they did from their principal or assistant principal. Billingsley and Cross (1991) and McKnab (1993) also reported this pattern in their research findings.

The global measures of administrative support used in previous studies "make it difficult to assess which specific aspects of support are important to retention/attrition" (Billingsley, in press, p. 25). This interview study extends previous research findings by defining the specific aspects of support associated with teachers' plans to stay in (e.g., helps obtain appropriate programming and services for students, helps with student discipline, demonstrates/communicates knowledge of special education) and leave (e.g., does not help obtain appropriate programming and services for students, does not help with

obtaining instructional materials, is inaccessible) special education teaching. The specific aspects of support defined in this study should help administrators assess and improve the support they provide.

Another aspect of support that was almost equally important to interviewees' intentions to remain in special education teaching in MCS was colleague support. Similar findings were revealed in a study by George, George, & Grosenick (1992) among teachers of the seriously emotionally disturbed in which lack of colleague support led to isolation and increased desires to leave special education teaching. Helping with instructional strategies/resources and allowing special education students to be mainstreamed in their classes were some of the ways colleagues were supportive of interviewees. Because of the small numbers of special educators within a school building, the location of their classrooms, and their itinerant schedules, special education teachers can feel isolated in their school settings. Providing more opportunities for colleague interaction and collaboration with other special education teachers or with regular education teachers may reduce these teachers' feelings of isolation and better retain them in the special education teaching force (George, George, & Grosenick, 1992).



Another factor that was important to teachers' career plans was work assignment (i.e., school factors, role-design, resources). Furthermore, work assignment was mentioned more often than any other factor as a reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS. Research from other special education teacher attrition studies (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1992; Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Platt & Olson, 1990) also revealed work assignment as affecting teachers' decisions to leave. Role-design factors, especially paperwork, were problematic for teachers interviewed in this study. This is consistent with previous research studies by Billingsley, Bodkins, and Hendricks (1992), Dangel, Bunch, and Coopman (1987), and Platt and Olson (1990). Not only did leavers and undecideds report paperwork to be excessive and repetitious, but they also indicated that it interfered with their teaching. This led to feelings of ineffectiveness as many teachers had to choose between providing instruction to their students and completing paperwork.

Another aspect of work assignment that was frequently mentioned as a reason for wanting to leave was resources. In contrast, past special education teacher attrition/retention studies did not reveal resources as a primary factor influencing teachers' career decisions. Many

leavers and undecideds commented that their annual allotment for instructional materials was inadequate. Interestingly, few interviewees identified resources as a reason for wanting to remain in special education teaching in MCS. When asked if resources were a problem for these teachers, some indicated that it was a problem but they would not consider it as a reason to leave. Those interviewees who gave resources as a reason for wanting to stay revealed that their building principal helped them obtain needed instructional materials and equipment for their students. Even though more money may not be available district-wide for spending on instructional materials, administrators at the building level may be able to use school-wide fund raising efforts and donations to supply special educators with additional resources and materials thereby increasing their level of job satisfaction and commitment.

Student factors were also clearly important to interviewees' career plans, especially for those who intend to remain in special education teaching in MCS. Helping students succeed and progress were important to these teachers' career intentions. The satisfaction and intrinsic rewards associated with working with students were primary reasons for wanting to remain in special education teaching. Although student factors were not as often given as reasons for leaving, some interviewees mentioned that slow student

progress caused them to feel ineffective as teachers and made them want to leave special education teaching. Previous research studies have also found that student-related factors can contribute to special education teacher attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1991) and job dissatisfaction (Pezzei & Oratio, 1991).

Various work rewards (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, ancillary rewards) were more often mentioned as a reason for wanting to stay than as a reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in MCS. Intrinsic rewards were more important to teachers' intentions to stay whereas extrinsic rewards were more important to leaving. As in previous studies (Berry, 1985; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982), salary was an extrinsic reward that influenced these teachers' career intentions. This finding is also consistent with some interviewees' future career plans as they expressed intentions to leave special education teaching to pursue better paying jobs. However, salary alone may not account for interviewees' plans to leave special education teaching (Metzke, 1988). Further examination of salary in conjunction with other factors such as administrative support, student factors, and work assignment is needed to determine their affect on special educators' career plans (Berry, 1985; Dangel, Bunch, & Coopman, 1987; Metzke, 1988).

Many of the teachers cited multiple job-related factors as reasons for wanting to remain in and leave special education teaching in MCS. Clearly, many of the factors in this study are interrelated. For example, a lack of administrative support likely leads to undesirable work conditions. Administrators who are unsupportive may not help special educators obtain instructional materials or may not attempt to reduce teachers' class size/caseload. Furthermore, both lack of administrative support and undesirable work conditions reduce the intrinsic rewards (e.g., feelings of effectiveness, challenging) special educators experience from teaching.

Factors identified by interviewees as reasons for wanting to remain in and leave special education teaching in MCS may not be complete. For example, there may be other factors that contributed to leavers' and undecideds' plans to leave that were not mentioned by interviewees. However, less experienced teachers may concentrate on more obvious factors such as work assignment than on less obvious factors (e.g., intrinsic rewards). It could also be that teachers are more likely to identify job-related factors (i.e., support, work assignment, student factors, work rewards) as influencing their decisions to leave rather than examine any of their own shortcomings that might threaten their self-esteem (Billingsley, in press). For example, teachers may

indicate large class sizes as a reason for wanting to leave. Instead, it could be that the teacher has inadequate classroom management skills. Interestingly, past research studies do not consider teacher effectiveness as a possible contributor to attrition (Billingsley, in press).

Demographic variables may have also influenced teachers' plans to remain in or leave special education teaching in MCS. The demographic information obtained from the interviewees suggests that differences may exist between the three teacher groups. For example, Whites more often indicated intentions to leave than did Blacks. Similarly, Dworkin (1980) found that urban White teachers were more likely to leave teaching than Blacks. This could be due to a stronger initial investment in teaching or a lack of career alternatives (Dworkin, 1980). The relationship between the demographic characteristics of the teacher groups and the factors influencing interviewees' career intentions will be further examined in another study.

Interestingly, interviewees entered special education teaching for many of the same reasons, and there was little difference in responses among the three teacher groups (i.e., stayers, leavers, undecideds). The most frequently provided reason for becoming a special education teacher was exposure to special needs populations. For leavers and undecideds, most of their exposure was through previous work

experiences or a disabled family member. Because of this previous exposure, these teachers may have a better understanding of what to expect from working with disabling populations. As apparent from their reasons for wanting to leave, it is not the students' disabling condition which has affected their intentions to leave special education teaching but the inadequate working conditions (e.g., lack of support, lack of resources) these teachers face.

When asked of their future career plans, the majority of teachers within each teacher group revealed some plans to remain in education although some teachers had previously indicated plans to leave special education teaching or were undecided about their career plans. This may seem to contradict interviewees' earlier responses, but the reality for these teachers could be that no other career alternatives exist for them or financial/family situations prohibit them from pursuing other careers. Therefore, some of the interviewees may justify their present situations. Of those special educators whose future career plans included leaving education, most planned to work in non-education related careers. These teachers stated that they were attracted to the autonomy, flexibility, and higher salaries that other careers seemed to offer. Giving teachers more autonomy over their programs and flexibility with instruction may help retain these special educators.

Furthermore, some leavers and undecideds found their current teaching position to be most desirable but only if improvements (e.g., smaller caseloads, less paperwork, adequate materials) were made in their work conditions. The majority of leavers, however, desired a transfer to another teaching position although teachers stated during the interviews that there was little opportunity for transfers. If improvements were made in teachers' work conditions and more opportunities were provided for transfers, special educators' level of job satisfaction and commitment may increase and MCS administrators may be better able to retain its special education teaching force.

#### **Implications for Administrators**

There are several implications for administrators that can be derived from this study's findings. However, please note that these findings are based on extreme groups (e.g., satisfied versus dissatisfied) instead of a random sample of teachers. Additional data from interviews with teachers who have actually remained in and left special education teaching could further explain factors influencing teachers' career decisions in urban school districts and the implications for school administrators.

The first implication from this study is that special attention to the job-related problems identified by leavers and undecideds is particularly important to prevent

attrition among these at-risk teachers. Teachers who are in the undecided group will eventually make decisions to remain in or leave special education teaching. Therefore, attending to work assignment and support factors is likely to be a productive strategy for dealing with the concerns of these teachers and hopefully keeping them in special education teaching.

Secondly, support and work assignment are critical in influencing special educators' plans to remain in and leave special education teaching. Therefore, any changes that are made must be made in these factors. It is unreasonable to expect teachers to work under conditions with heavy caseloads and few instructional materials. The detailed examples of reasons for wanting to stay in and leave listed in Appendices G and H provide numerous ideas for improving work conditions in MCS and reinforcing positive practices already in place. Fortunately, many factors such as support and work assignment are within the school district's control. However, some job-related changes are easier to make than others. For example, administrators can more readily give teachers a pat on the back than reduce their class sizes or increase their annual allotment for instructional materials.

Finally, when asked what actions MCS could take to keep these teachers in special education teaching, leavers and



undecideds were able to make numerous recommendations (see Table 11). The suggestions they made were clearly related to their reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching. Some of these teachers indicated that they desired to help make changes and would consider staying if these changes were made.

### **Chapter Summary**

In conclusion, there were several key job-related factors (i.e., support, work assignment, student factors, work rewards) that special educators identified as reasons for wanting to remain in and leave special education teaching in MCS. Further examination of these factors revealed that some of these are controlled by the school district and can be changed by the school district. Interviewees were able to make numerous recommendations for improvement and change. In addition, some interviewees wanted to be instrumental in making these changes and be given opportunities for input into decision making. By listening to teachers' concerns and including them in the decision making process, school administrators may positively affect teachers' career decisions and better retain their special education teaching force.

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**Appendix A**  
**Screening Survey Instrument**

December 20, 1991

LETTER FOR SCREENING STUDY TEACHERS

Dear Teacher:

Under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, the Research Triangle Institute has joined with the Memphis City Schools (MCS) to conduct a three-year study to improve the retention of special education teachers in the MCS. The purpose of this study is to identify factors that contribute to special education teacher attrition, and to assist the MCS in developing a plan to enhance the retention of these teachers. Study findings will also be used by Memphis State University to improve its teacher training programs. The enclosed abstract provides further details about the study, in which RTI is collaborating with the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Memphis State University, and the Institute on a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.

*We are contacting the special education teachers who are currently employed in the MCS in order to obtain an initial "snapshot" of the job satisfaction and career plans of MCS's current special education teachers. We are requesting that you participate in the study by completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to us in the postage-paid envelope provided within the next two weeks.*

*Your participation will help to improve the retention of regular and special educators in Memphis. Since the findings of this study will become part of a national research data base relative to training and retaining teachers, your participation will also make a significant contribution to improving regular and special education in other school districts across the nation--especially those in Tennessee.*

Please be assured that all individually identifying data will be held in *strictest confidence*, and will be reported only in aggregate form. If you have any questions about the study or about the questionnaire, please call the Project Assistant, Barbara Elliott, toll-free at 1-800-334-8571 (8:30 AM-5:00 PM EST).

Thank you for your assistance in this important study, which is important not only to the MCS but to the field of special education.

Sincerely,

John N. Pyecha, Ph.D.  
Project Director

# Memphis City Special Education Questionnaire

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LABEL

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## PART A: TEACHING ASSIGNMENT

1. Indicate which type of special education students you teach.

(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Learning disabled.....                             | 1  |
| Speech/language impaired.....                      | 2  |
| Emotionally disturbed.....                         | 3  |
| Educable mentally retarded.....                    | 4  |
| Trainable mentally retarded.....                   | 5  |
| Severe/profoundly retarded.....                    | 6  |
| Deaf/hearing impaired.....                         | 7  |
| Blind/visually impaired.....                       | 8  |
| Deaf-Blind.....                                    | 9  |
| Autistic.....                                      | 10 |
| Traumatic brain injury.....                        | 11 |
| Physically disabled (orthopedically impaired)..... | 12 |
| Multidisabled.....                                 | 13 |
| Health impaired.....                               | 14 |
| Developmentally delayed.....                       | 15 |
| Pre-school disabled.....                           | 16 |
| Gifted and talented.....                           | 17 |
| Other (Please specify).....                        | 18 |

2. Indicate the type of program in which you are currently teaching. *Circle only one, your primary assignment.*

(CIRCLE ONE)

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Itinerant.....                        | 1 |
| Resource.....                         | 2 |
| Combined resource/self-contained..... | 3 |
| Self-contained.....                   | 4 |
| Special school.....                   | 5 |
| Home/hospital-based instruction.....  | 6 |
| Other (Please specify).....           | 7 |

**PART B: ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHING**

*Please circle the response choice that best reflects how you feel about each of the statements.*

- |   | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Tend to<br/>Agree</i> | <i>Tend to<br/>Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> |
|---|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. I am satisfied with my present teaching position .....                               | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 2. If I could plan my career over again, I would choose special education teaching..... | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 3. I would recommend Memphis to others as a good place to teach .....                   | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 4. I enjoy working in my school(s).....   | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 5. If I could earn as much money in another profession, I would stop teaching.....      | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 6. I feel successful and competent in my present position .....                         | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 7. I often have thoughts about quitting my job.....                                     | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 8. For me, special education is the best of all professions.....                        | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 9. Deciding to teach in special education was a definite mistake on my part.....        | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |
| 10. When I entered special education teaching, I planned to stay for many years.....    | 1.....       | 2.....                   | 3.....                      | 4               |

**PART C: SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHING PLANS**

1. How long do you plan to remain in special education teaching (in or outside of Memphis)?

**(CIRCLE ONE)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Definitely plan to leave special education teaching as soon as I can ..... | 1 |
| Will probably continue unless something better comes along.....            | 2 |
| Until I am eligible for retirement.....                                    | 3 |
| As long as I am able.....  | 4 |
| Undecided at this time.....  | 5 |

2. How long do you plan to remain in special education teaching in Memphis?

(CIRCLE ONE)

- Definitely plan to leave special education teaching as soon as I can.....1
- Will probably continue unless something better comes along.....2
- Until I am eligible for retirement.....3
- As long as I am able.....4
- Undecided at this time.....5

3. Are you planning to leave your special education position in Memphis anytime during the next three years?

(CIRCLE ONE)

- Yes.....1
- No.....2 GO TO PART D

4. Indicate what you hope to be doing after leaving your special education position.

(CIRCLE ONE)

- Teaching special education in another school district.....1
- Teaching general education in the same school in Memphis.....2
- Teaching general education in another school in Memphis.....3
- Teaching general education in another school district.....4
- Employed in a nonteaching job in education field.....5
- Employed outside of education.....6
- Retired .....7
- Pursuing a graduate degree full time in special education.....8
- Pursuing a graduate degree full time in education, but not special education.....9
- Pursuing a graduate degree full time in non-education field.....10
- Staying at home, e.g., home making, child rearing.....11
- Other (*please explain*).....12

5. Do you want to transfer to another special education teaching position in Memphis in the next three years?

(CIRCLE ONE)

- Yes.....1
- No .....2 GO TO PART D

6. What type of transfer do you desire?

(CIRCLE ONE)

- Change to another school.....1
- Change to a different school level (e.g., elementary to jr. high).....2
- Change to a different service delivery model (e.g., from self-contained to resource).....3
- Change to teaching a different disability area (e.g., from emotionally disturbed to learning disabilities).....4





**Appendix B**  
**Data Analysis Plan**

## DATA ANALYSIS FOR MEMPHIS SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE AND PERSONNEL DATA

### A. General Directions

1. List the data base (demographic and background variables and questionnaire responses) for respondents, ordered by ID number.
2. Provide a profile of the demographic characteristics of (a) the MCS population on our mailing list, (b) our respondents, and (c) our nonrespondents. Provide one-way profiles for the following variables: age, race, gender, teaching experience, grade level assignment, endorsement area, teaching assignment (function codes), career ladder status, and old and new NTE standard scores. This profile will include frequency distributions for all of the above, and means, standard deviations, and ranges for years of experience and NTE scores.
3. Compute composite scores (as defined below) by summing valid responses to the items defining each score and dividing by the number of valid responses (i.e., compute the arithmetic average). Instructions regarding nonresponses may differ for some types of composite scores; therefore, such instructions are given below when specific scores are discussed.

### B. Part A: Teaching Assignment

1. Compute frequencies and percentages for each response choice for items 1 and 2 for the total group of respondents.

### C. Part B: Attitudes Toward Teaching

1. Compute a "job satisfaction" composite score (i.e., the arithmetic average of the values assigned in the questionnaire) for questions 1,3,4,6, and 7 under Part B. This needs to be computed to determine the overall level of job satisfaction for MCS special educators. Be sure to reverse code Question 7 before computing. If a teacher is missing a response for one or more of the items defining the composite score, treat that teacher as a nonresponse as far as this composite score is concerned.

2. Compute a "job commitment" composite score for questions 2, 5, 8, and 9 under Part B. This needs to be computed to determine the overall level of commitment for MCS special educators. Reverse code questions 5 and 9 before computing. If a teacher is missing a response for one or more of these items, treat that teacher as a nonresponse as far as this composite score is concerned.
3. Compute a composite score for questions 1-9 for all of the respondents. Be sure to reverse code in the same manner as described in 1 and 2 above. If a teacher is missing a response for more than one of these items, treat that teacher as a nonresponse as far as this composite score is concerned.
4. Compute a group mean separately for items 3 and 10.
5. Compute internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the job satisfaction (#1 above), commitment (#2 above), and the combined composite scores (#3 above).

D. Part C: Special Education Teaching Plans

1. Compute group frequencies and percentages for each response choice for questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The response foils for questions 1 and 2 in this part were taken directly from the SASS questionnaire.
2. Flag, and compute frequencies and percentages for, those teachers who violate the skip patterns in items 3 and 5.

E. Part D: Reasons for Leaving or Staying in Special Education

This qualitative data will be content analyzed for patterns and themes by Virginia Tech Staff. Each different type of response will be identified under the two major themes and these individual responses will then be analyzed for broader categories. Frequencies for common categories/themes will also be tallied.

F. Create Individual Special Education Teacher Profile Table

List the following variables for each questionnaire respondent in a table:

1. The Part B, nine-item composite score (i.e., items B1-B9). Use this composite score to order the listing in this table. Order from the highest to lowest score.
2. Teacher ID Code
3. Teacher's school name
4. Age
5. Gender
6. Years of experience
7. Career ladder status
8. NTE standard scores (common, communication skills, general knowledge, and professional knowledge)
9. Race
10. Responses for questionnaire items A1, A2, B3, B10, C1, C2, and C4
11. Grade level taught
12. Endorsement area
13. Function code (teacher assignment)

**Appendix C**  
**Telephone Script**

## TELEPHONE SCRIPT

### A. Introduction

Hello. May I speak to \_\_\_\_\_ ? My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am working with the Research Triangle Institute in North Carolina to schedule teacher interviews for the special education teacher retention project. Thank you so much for returning the mailed questionnaire you received earlier.

As you already know, we want to learn more about what makes teachers want to stay in or leave special education teaching. Based on our findings, RTI will use what we learn to work with Memphis City Schools to develop a strategic action plan to improve the working conditions of special education teachers.

### B. Determine Willingness to Participate in Interview

We hope that you will agree to talk with us about your experiences as a teacher in Memphis. The interviews will be conducted by staff members from RTI and Virginia Tech from March 9 through March 21. The information you provide during the interviews will be completely confidential—only group data will be released and no personally identifying information will be included in the reports.

Would you be willing to participate in the interviews? (If yes, proceed with the following. If not, thank them for their cooperation thus far and discontinue script.)

### C. Schedule Interview

1. First, determine whether they want to be interviewed.
2. Next, determine the best place, date, and time of the interview.
3. Finally, determine the specific location for the interview. For example, if they are to meet at the teacher's school, determine whether they want the interviewer to come by the classroom or meet them in the front office.

D. Thank Teachers

Thank the teachers for their participation. Tell them that they will receive a postcard in a few days confirming the interview date, time, and place. This card will contain the name and telephone number of a contact person in case a schedule change is necessary.



**Appendix D**  
**Training Schedule**

## TRAINING SCHEDULE

| <b>Date</b>               | <b>Activity</b>   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Week of February 17, 1992 | Schedule practice interviews  |
| February 25, 1992         | Training Session 1  |
| February 27, 1992         | Field-test interview guide at Fallon Park Elementary and Patrick Henry High Schools |
| March 3, 1992             | Training Session 2  |
| March 5, 1992             | Field-test and revise interview guide at Woodrow Wilson Middle School               |

**Appendix E**  
**Training Session Agendas**

## TRAINING SESSION 1

Prior to Session 1, each interviewer will read/review the following:

1. Memphis City Schools Research Grant Proposal
2. Chapters 1-3 of Mary Beth Hendrick's dissertation
3. Chapter 7, "Qualitative Interviewing" (Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods by M. Q. Patton, 1991, Sage Publications)
4. Proposed Interview Guide

### Session 1 Objectives:

- 1.0 to review the scope of the study
- 2.0 to review and discuss interview procedures
- 3.0 to review and discuss the procedures for reporting the interview findings
- 4.0 to conduct a practice interview
- 5.0 to discuss the interview guide field-testing

### Session 1 Activities:

1. Review the scope of the study.

\* Brief overview of the entire research project. Discuss how this study fits into the entire research project.

\* Discuss the purpose of the study.

\* Review the study's hypotheses. Discuss each interviewer's biases and how they might affect the outcome of the study.

2. Review and discuss procedures for the interviews (see proposed interview guide).

\* Discuss techniques for establishing rapport with the interviewees.

\* Discuss techniques for assuring confidentiality of the interviewee responses.

\* Identify and discuss additional background information that will be obtained during the interviews.

\* Discuss probing techniques. Give specific examples of probes that can be used during the interviews to gather additional information.

\* Discuss procedures for questioning/probing for the following information (provide numerous examples):

- specific contextual factors influencing teachers' career plans
- actions that could be taken to make teachers want to stay in special education teaching
- extent to which "reasons for leaving" are also problems for "stayers"
- future career plans

3. Review and discuss the procedure for reporting the interview findings (see proposed interview guide). Provide numerous examples.

4. Conduct a practice interview.

\* The interviewers will conduct a practice interview with a special education teacher from Montgomery County Schools.

\* After the interview, discuss various aspects of the interview (e.g., interview procedures; probing techniques; information obtained).

\* Compare and discuss the interview report forms.

\* Discuss any possible problems that occurred or revisions to the interview guide.

5. Discuss the interview guide field-testing.

\* Identify time and place of the interviews.

\* Identify the interviewees.

\* Discuss who will be conducting each of the interviews.

## TRAINING SESSION 2

### Session 2 Objectives:

- 1.0 to discuss the practice interviews
- 2.0 to make necessary revisions to the interview guide
- 3.0 to discuss interview guide field-testing

### Session 2 Activities:

1. Discuss the practice interviews.
  - \* Discuss interviewees' responses.
  - \* Discuss examples of probes that were used.
  - \* Identify/discuss any problems that occurred during the practice interviews. Brainstorm for solutions.
2. Make necessary revisions to the interview guide.
3. Discuss the interview guide field-testing.
  - \* Identify time and place of the interviews.
  - \* Identify the interviewees.
  - \* Discuss who will be conducting each of the interviews.

**Appendix F**  
**Interview Guide and Report Form**

## MCS STAYERS

### I. Establish Rapport

- \* Thank interviewee for participating in the interview
- \* Introduce myself (e.g., former special educator; my role in the project)
- \* Purpose of the interview (e.g., to assist in developing MCS strategic plan to retain special education teachers; want to better understand reasons for wanting to stay in special education teaching)
- \* Permission to tape interview (e.g., taping to corroborate only; tapes will be taken directly to Virginia Tech; tapes will be destroyed after they are analyzed)
- \* Confidentiality of information
- \* Ask if interviewee has any questions?

### II. Background Information (from cover sheet)

### III. Information on Becoming a Special Education Teacher

**Tell me about how you became a special education teacher.**

### IV. Reasons for Wanting to Stay

**A. I know that there are things about your job that you like. However, I am really interested in the primary reasons that you want to stay in special education teaching in your school.**

- \* Verify (from cover sheet) primary reasons for wanting to stay/ Additional reasons?
- \* Probe to understand reasons for wanting to stay
  - Ex. Tell me more about ...
  - Give me an example ...
  - What do you mean by ...
  - How does \_\_\_\_ influence your decision to stay?
  - How does \_\_\_\_ affect your life as a teacher?
  - Are there are other work-related reasons for wanting to stay?
  - Are there other non-work related conditions for wanting to stay?

**B. What is your most important reason for wanting to stay in special education teaching in this school?**



V. Perceptions of Others' Problems

Other teachers' have identified (e.g., paperwork; lack of materials; large class sizes) as reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching. Is this a problem for you? If not, why?

VI. Future career plans

**Tell me about your future career plans.**

\* Probe to find out future career plans

5 years from now?

10 years from now?

What is it that attracts you to special education teaching over other teaching positions?

\* Probe to find out attraction to MCS (if they plan to stay).

VII. Choice of Teaching Positions

If you could have any teaching position, what position would it be? For what reasons?

VIII. End of Interview

Anything else about your work situation that is important to your staying? (Check my notes.) Thank you.

Summarize interview

Phone number of interviewee (if necessary)

## MCS LEAVERS

### I. Establish Rapport

- \* Thank interviewee for participating in the interview
- \* Introduce myself (e.g., former special educator; my role in the project)
- \* Purpose of the interview (e.g., to assist in developing MCS strategic plan to retain special education teachers; want to better understand reasons for wanting to leave special education teaching)
- \* Permission to tape interview (e.g., taping to corroborate only; tapes will be taken directly to Virginia Tech; tapes will be destroyed after they are analyzed)
- \* Confidentiality of information
- \* Ask if interviewee has any questions?

### II. Background Information (from cover sheet)

### III. Information on Becoming a Special Education Teacher

**Tell me about how you became a special education teacher.**

### IV. Reasons for Wanting to Leave

**A. I know that there are things about your job that you dislike. However, I am really interested in the primary reasons that you want to leave special education teaching in your school.**

- \* Verify (from cover sheet) primary reasons for wanting to leave/ Additional reasons?
- \* Probe to understand reasons for wanting to leave
  - Ex. Tell me more about ...
  - Give me an example ...
  - What do you mean by ...
  - How does \_\_\_\_ influence your decision to leave?
  - How does \_\_\_\_ affect your life as a teacher?
  - Are there other work-related reasons for wanting to leave?
  - Are there other non-work related reasons for wanting to leave?

**B. What is your most important reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in this school?**

**V. Actions Taken to Make You Want to Stay**

**What could MCS do to make you want to stay in special education teaching?**

**VI. Future career plans**

**Tell me about your future career plans.**

**\* Probe to find out future career plans**

5 years from now?

10 years from now?

Would you ever return to special education teaching? Why or why not?

What is it about \_\_\_\_\_ that attracts you over special education teaching?

**\* Probe to find out attractions to other positions**

**\* Probe to find out reasons for wanting to leave Memphis (why not just move to another school in MCS?)**

**VII. Choice of Teaching Positions**

**If you could have any teaching position, what position would it be? For what reasons?**

**VIII. End of Interview**

**Anything else about your work situation that is important to your leaving? (Check my notes.) Thank you.**

Summarize interview

Phone number of interviewee (if necessary)

## MCS UNDECIDED

### I. Establish Rapport

- \* Thank interviewee for participating in the interview
- \* Introduce myself (e.g., former special educator; my role in the project)
- \* Purpose of the interview (e.g., to assist in developing MCS strategic plan to retain special education teachers; want to better understand reasons for wanting to stay/leave special education teaching)
- \* Permission to tape interview (e.g., taping to corroborate only; tapes will be taken directly to Virginia Tech; tapes will be destroyed after they are analyzed)
- \* Confidentiality of information
- \* Ask if interviewee has any questions?

### II. Background Information (from cover sheet)

### III. Information on Becoming a Special Education Teacher

**Tell me about how you became a special education teacher.**

### IV. Reasons for Wanting to Stay/Leave

#### A. Staying Reasons

**1. I know that there are things about your job that you like. However, I am really interested in the primary reasons that are critical to your staying in special education teaching in your school.**

- \* Verify (from cover sheet) primary reasons for wanting to stay/ Additional reasons?
- \* Probe to understand reasons for wanting to stay

Ex. Tell me more about ...  
Give me an example ...  
What do you mean by ...  
How does \_\_\_\_ influence your decision to stay?  
How does \_\_\_\_ affect your life as a teacher?  
Are there other work-related reasons for wanting to stay?

Are there other non-work related reasons for wanting to stay?

2. What is your most important reason for wanting to stay in special education teaching in this school?

B. Leaving Reasons

1. I know that there are things about your job that you dislike. However, I am really interested in the primary reasons that are critical to your leaving special education teaching in your school.

- \* Verify (from cover sheet) primary reasons for wanting to leave/ Additional reasons?
- \* Probe to understand reasons for wanting to leave

Ex. Tell me more about ...  
Give me an example ...  
What do you mean by ...  
How does \_\_\_\_ influence your decision to leave?  
How does \_\_\_\_ affect your life as a teacher?  
Are there other work-related reasons for wanting to leave?  
Are there other non-work related reasons for wanting to leave?

2. What is your most important reason for wanting to leave special education teaching in this school?

V. Actions Taken to Make You Want to Stay

What could MCS do to make you decide to stay in special education teaching?

VI. Future career plans

Tell me about your future career plans.

- \* Probe to find out future career plans
  - 5 years from now?
  - 10 years from now?
  - Would you ever return to special education teaching? Why or why not?
  - What is it about \_\_\_\_\_ that attracts you?
- \* Probe to find out if interviewee wants to stay/leave school, teaching position, and MCS (as opposed to other districts)

VII. Choice of Teaching Positions

If you could have any teaching position, what position would it be? For what reasons?

VIII. End of Interview

Anything else about your work situation that is important to your career decision? (Check my notes.) Thank you.

Summarize interview

Phone number of interviewee (if necessary)

INTERVIEW COVER SHEET

A. General

1. Identification Number of Interviewee:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Satisfied Stayer  
\_\_\_\_\_ Dissatisfied Leaver  
\_\_\_\_\_ Undecided
2. Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Beginning Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Time: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Interviewee Background Information

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
3. Career Ladder Level \_\_\_\_\_
4. NTE Scores \_\_\_\_\_
5. Race \_\_\_\_\_
6. School \_\_\_\_\_
- \*7. Assignment/Exceptionality Area \_\_\_\_\_  
Age/Grade Range \_\_\_\_\_
- \*8. Total Yrs. Special Education Teaching Experience \_\_\_\_\_  
a. In the MCS \_\_\_\_\_  
b. Elsewhere \_\_\_\_\_
- \*9. Total Yrs. of Other Teaching Experience \_\_\_\_\_  
a. In the MCS \_\_\_\_\_  
b. Elsewhere \_\_\_\_\_
- \*10. Degree(s) Held \_\_\_\_\_
- \*11. # of Children \_\_\_\_\_
- \*12. Currently Married? \_\_\_\_\_

Gather the information highlighted with a (\*) during the interview.

C. Summary of Stay/Leave Reasons

Briefly list reasons for staying/leaving from screening questionnaire. Check off the reasons as they are identified by the interviewee.

1. Staying:
  
  
2. Leaving:

D. Additional Reasons for Staying/Leaving

Briefly list any additional reasons for staying/leaving that are identified by the interviewee but were not included on the screening questionnaire.

1. Staying:
  
  
2. Leaving:

**INTERVIEW REPORT FORM**

**A. General**

1. Identification Number of Interviewee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Satisfied Stayer  
\_\_\_\_\_ Dissatisfied Leaver  
\_\_\_\_\_ Undecided

2. Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Beginning Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Time: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Interviewee Background Information**

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender \_\_\_\_\_

3. Career Ladder Level \_\_\_\_\_

4. NTE Scores \_\_\_\_\_

5. Race \_\_\_\_\_

\*6. Assignment/Exceptionality Area \_\_\_\_\_

\*7. Total Yrs. Special Education Teaching Experience \_\_\_\_

a. In the MCS \_\_\_\_\_

b. Elsewhere \_\_\_\_\_

\*8. Total Yrs. of Other Teaching Experience \_\_\_\_

a. In the MCS \_\_\_\_\_

b. Elsewhere \_\_\_\_\_

\*9. Degrees Held \_\_\_\_\_

\*10. # of Children \_\_\_\_\_

\*11. Currently Married? \_\_\_\_\_

Gather the information highlighted with a (\*) during the interview.

**C. Description of How Interviewee Became A Special Education Teacher**

**D. Summary of Stay/Leave Reasons**

Briefly list reasons for staying/leaving from screening questionnaire. Check off the reasons as they are identified by the interviewee.

1. Staying:



2. Leaving:

E. Additional Reasons for Staying/Leaving

Briefly list any additional reasons for staying/leaving that are identified by the interviewee but were not included on the screening questionnaire.

1. Staying:

2. Leaving:

F. Description of Reasons for Staying/Leaving Special Education Teaching in Interviewee's Particular School

List the most important reason first.

1. Reason 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

2. Reason 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

3. Reason 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

4. Reason 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

G. Reasons for Specifically Staying in Special Education Teaching As Opposed to Other Teaching Positions

1. Reason 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

2. Reason 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

3. Reason 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

4. Reason 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

H. For "Leavers/Undecideds" Only: Actions That Would Make You Want to Stay

I. For "Stayers" Only: Their Perceptions of Others' Problems

J. Future Career Plans

K. Other Comments/Observations

This section includes any additional relevant comments made by the interviewee, as well as any specific reactions that the interviewer may have to the interview and reported findings.

L. Observations of Setting

M. Interviewer's Recommendations

This section includes the interviewer's personal recommendations or suggestions regarding the interviewee's teaching situation.

**Appendix G**

**Reasons for Wanting to Stay in  
Special Education Teaching in MCS**

**Reasons for Wanting to Stay In Special Education Teaching In the MCS**  
**(Percents based on Column Totals)**

| Reasons for Staying   | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I. Support  |                            |                              |                          |
| A. Administrative Support   |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Provides assistance to teacher   |                            |                              |                          |
| a. Helps obtain appropriate programming and services for special education students | 12 (60%)                   | 4 (20%)                      | 16 (40%)                 |
| • attends M-team meetings   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • assists with student placement  | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • obtains counseling services for students  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • encourages mainstreaming of special education students                            | x                          | x                            |                          |
| b. Helps obtain resources   | 8 (40%)                    | 6 (30%)                      | 14 (35%)                 |
| • assists teachers in obtaining instructional materials                             | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • gives teachers access to regular education materials                              | x                          |                              |                          |
| • assists teacher in obtaining instructional equipment                              |                            | x                            |                          |
| c. Helps with student discipline  | 6 (30%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 10 (25%)                 |
| • handles discipline problems with preschoolers                                     | x                          |                              |                          |
| • helps students learn appropriate cafeteria and classroom behavior                 | x                          |                              |                          |
| • establishes effective discipline policies within the school                       | x                          |                              |                          |
| d. Helps with parent and teacher problems   | 2 (10%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 6 (15%)                  |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying   | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • helps teacher get parents more involved   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • helps with racial problems between teachers   |                            | x                            |                          |
| • helps with teacher problems   |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>2. Establishes and maintains an effective communication system</b>                               |                            |                              |                          |
| <b>a. Demonstrates/communicates knowledge of special education</b>                                  | <b>10 (50%)</b>            | <b>6 (30%)</b>               | <b>16 (40%)</b>          |
| • is knowledgeable about special education policies   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • explains special education policies   |                            | x                            |                          |
| • keeps teachers updated about procedural changes   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • understands special educator's roles and responsibilities   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • can offer teachers suggestions on instructional strategies to use with students with disabilities | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • is knowledgeable about student disabilities   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| <b>b. Is accessible to teachers</b>   | <b>8 (40%)</b>             | <b>2 (10%)</b>               | <b>10 (25%)</b>          |
| • sees teacher once every three weeks   |                            | x                            |                          |
| • visits teacher's class regularly  | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • returns teacher's calls promptly  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • allows teacher to call at home  | x                          |                              |                          |
| <b>c. Demonstrates/communicates knowledge about school roles and responsibilities</b>               | <b>4 (20%)</b>             | <b>0 (0%)</b>                | <b>4 (10%)</b>           |
| • keeps teachers informed about district policies   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • serves as teacher's liaison to Board  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • helps cafeteria aides develop job responsibilities  | x                          |                              |                          |
| <b>3. Treats teacher like a professional</b>  |                            |                              |                          |
| <b>a. Gives teacher input into decision making/autonomy</b>   | <b>10 (50%)</b>            | <b>8 (40%)</b>               | <b>18 (45%)</b>          |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying   | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • lets teacher attempt to solve problems  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • allows teacher opportunity to develop her own program                                     | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • asks teacher for his/her opinion about special education-related issues                   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • asks teachers to identify school problems and solutions to problems                       |                            | x                            |                          |
| • lets teachers make decisions about the amount of time students spend in special education |                            | x                            |                          |
| • consults with teacher about ways to discipline students                                   |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>b. Communicates confidence and respect</b>   | <b>7 (35%)</b>             | <b>3 (15%)</b>               | <b>10 (25%)</b>          |
| • respects teacher's capabilities   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • trusts teacher with confidential information  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • lets teacher leave work early when needed   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • is fair and treats all employees equally  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • has backed teacher when voicing concerns to the Board                                     |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>4. Demonstrates interest in students and faculty</b>                                     |                            |                              |                          |
| <b>a. Demonstrates personal interest in students</b>  | <b>9 (45%)</b>             | <b>3 (15%)</b>               | <b>12 (30%)</b>          |
| • takes time to talk with and listen to students  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • shares with students  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • tells students that they are "special people"   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • conveys that students are a top priority  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • rewards students for their accomplishments  |                            | x                            |                          |
| • counsels children about their home situation  |                            | x                            |                          |
| • has helped poor student buy his class ring  |                            | x                            |                          |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying  | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| b. Demonstrates personal interest in teacher                   | 2 (10%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 4 (10%)                  |
| • talks with teacher about personal problems                   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • shows concern for teacher                                    | x                          | x                            |                          |
| 5. Facilitates staff development                               |                            |                              |                          |
| a. Knowledgeably assists and evaluates teachers                | 6 (30%)                    | 3 (15%)                      | 9 (23%)                  |
| • gives teachers feedback without making them feel incompetent | x                          |                              |                          |
| • provides feedback to teachers                                | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • assists teachers through the evaluation process              | x                          |                              |                          |
| b. Provides opportunities for professional growth              | 2 (10%)                    | 3 (15%)                      | 5 (13%)                  |
| • conducts informative inservices                              | x                          |                              |                          |
| • provides opportunities for growth                            | x                          |                              |                          |
| • provides opportunities for leadership responsibilities       | x                          |                              |                          |
| B. Colleague Support   |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Provides assistance to teachers                             |                            |                              |                          |
| a. Helps with student discipline problems                      | 6 (30%)                    | 3 (15%)                      | 9 (23%)                  |
| • helps teacher "track down" students when they skip class     | x                          |                              |                          |
| b. helps with instructional strategies and resources           | 5 (25%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 7 (18%)                  |
| • assists teacher with instructional modules and projects      | x                          |                              |                          |
| • exchanges instructional ideas with teacher                   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • shares instructional materials with teacher                  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • tells teacher instructional skills to work on with students  | x                          |                              |                          |
| c. Helps obtain needed services for students with disabilities | 2 (10%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 4 (10%)                  |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying   | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • helped teacher get glasses for a student  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • quickly tests students who are referred   | x                          |                              |                          |
| <b>d. Other</b>   | <b>3 (15%)</b>             | <b>2 (10%)</b>               | <b>5 (13%)</b>           |
| • sends students to teacher on time   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • tells teacher when students will not be attending class                         | x                          |                              |                          |
| • helps with teacher's evaluation   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • helps with parent problems  |                            | x                            |                          |
| • helps with scheduling and grading of students                                   |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>2. Demonstrates/communicates respect/interest in special education teacher</b> | <b>10 (50%)</b>            | <b>8 (40%)</b>               | <b>18 (45%)</b>          |
| • accepts special education teacher   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • compliments teacher on the "good job he/she is doing"                           | x                          |                              |                          |
| • Listens to teacher on "a bad day"   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • is a "buddy" to teacher   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • asks special education teacher to teach math skills                             | x                          |                              |                          |
| • team teaches with special education teacher                                     | x                          |                              |                          |
| • asks teacher for his/her assistance   |                            | x                            |                          |
| • values teacher's opinion  |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>3. Helps disabled students be successful within their classrooms</b>           |                            |                              |                          |
| <b>a. Allows special education students to be mainstreamed in their classes</b>   | <b>5 (25%)</b>             | <b>10 (50%)</b>              | <b>15 (38%)</b>          |
| • encourages their students to interact with special education students           |                            | x                            |                          |
| • invites special education students on field trips                               |                            | x                            |                          |
| • invites special education students to participate in school programs            |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>b. Adapts and modifies instruction for students</b>                            | <b>2 (10%)</b>             | <b>2 (10%)</b>               | <b>4 (10%)</b>           |

(continued)



| Reasons for Staying  | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • tries different teaching techniques with students              | x                          |                              |                          |
| • modifies student assignments                                   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • implements behavior modification systems with students         | x                          |                              |                          |
| • identifies interventions that can be used in their classes     | x                          |                              |                          |
| <b>C. Parent Support</b>   |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Cooperates with teacher                                       | 0 (0%)                     | 3 (15%)                      | 3 (8%)                   |
| • when teacher requests parents work with their children at home |                            | x                            |                          |
| • gives teacher autonomy over their child's program              |                            | x                            |                          |
| 2. Maintains open communication with teacher                     | 2 (10%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 2 (5%)                   |
| • communicates with teacher on a regular basis                   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • discusses their child's progress with teacher                  | x                          |                              |                          |
| <b>II. Work Assignment</b>                                       |                            |                              |                          |
| <b>A. School Factors</b>   |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Likes school location   | 7 (35%)                    | 6 (30%)                      | 13 (33%)                 |
| • likes Memphis  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school is located near teacher's home                          | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • school is located in a nice neighborhood                       | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • school is located in safe area                                 | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school is located near central office                          | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school is located near Memphis State University                | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school is located near child's day care center                 |                            | x                            |                          |
| 2. Has adequate facilities                                       | 5 (25%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 9 (23%)                  |
| • school is new  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school has new furnishings                                     | x                          |                              |                          |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying   | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • school is air conditioned   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • teacher's classroom is in school building                         | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school is accessible to disabled persons                          | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school has recently been remodeled                                | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school is well-equipped to meet special education students' needs | x                          | x                            |                          |
| 3. Other  | 3 (15%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 5 (13%)                  |
| • school is well-respected  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school has a casual dress code                                    | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school has site-based management                                  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • school has wide array of support services                         | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • school offers a wide array of education services                  |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>B. Role-design</b>   |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Has opportunities for individualization                          | 8 (40%)                    | 1 (5%)                       | 9 (23%)                  |
| 2. Has flexibility  | 5 (25%)                    | 3 (15%)                      | 8 (20%)                  |
| • has flexibility over scheduling                                   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • has flexibility over pacing of instruction                        | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • can try new techniques with students                              | x                          |                              |                          |
| • can be creative with students                                     | x                          |                              |                          |
| 3. Is not bored   | 2 (10%)                    | 1 (5%)                       | 3 (8%)                   |
| • "no two days are the same"  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • job is not monotonous   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| 4. Does not have to perform paperwork/nonteaching duties            | 2 (10%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 2 (5%)                   |
| • has less paperwork to complete than regular educators             | x                          |                              |                          |
| • does not have to perform bus or lunch duty                        | x                          |                              |                          |
| 5. Other  | 2 (10%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 2 (5%)                   |
| • likes the age group that teacher instructs                        | x                          |                              |                          |
| • likes itinerant teaching position                                 | x                          |                              |                          |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying   | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| C. Resources  | 0 (0%)                     | 2 (10%)                      | 2 (5%)                   |
| • has qualified and experienced assistants                            |                            | x                            |                          |
| • has adequate supply of instructional materials                      |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>III. Student Factors</b>   |                            |                              |                          |
| A. Enjoys Helping Students Succeed/Progress                           | 17 (85%)                   | 16 (80%)                     | 33 (83%)                 |
| • wants to help students lead successful lives                        | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • enjoys seeing students receive school-wide recognition              | x                          |                              |                          |
| • enjoys seeing former students accomplish something with their lives | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • enjoys seeing students achieve academically and socially            | x                          |                              |                          |
| • enjoys making students feel good about themselves                   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • enjoys making a difference in students' lives                       | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • enjoys helping students gain social and self-help skills            |                            | x                            |                          |
| • enjoys helping students learn to read                               |                            | x                            |                          |
| B. Likes Student Characteristics                                      | 8 (40%)                    | 8 (40%)                      | 16 (40%)                 |
| • kids are interesting  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • students are motivated to learn                                     | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • students appreciate teacher   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • students are happy/students have good attitudes                     | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • students enjoy receiving praise and attention                       | x                          |                              |                          |
| • students are not behavior problems                                  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • students want to please the teacher                                 |                            | x                            |                          |
| C. Has Feelings of Concern/Responsibility for Students                | 3 (15%)                    | 6 (30%)                      | 9 (23%)                  |
| • feels needed by students  | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • talks to students about their problems                              |                            | x                            |                          |
| <b>IV. Work Rewards</b>   |                            |                              |                          |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying  | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>A. Intrinsic Rewards</b>  |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Has feelings of competence and success                                | 7 (35%)                    | 5 (25%)                      | 12 (30%)                 |
| • is able to create a positive learning environment for students         | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • has special talent for teaching  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • is able to effectively instruct students                               | x                          |                              |                          |
| • is able to identify student problems                                   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • is able to identify/assess students for placement in special education | x                          |                              |                          |
| • provides assistance to students' teachers                              | x                          |                              |                          |
| • provides assistance to students' parents                               | x                          |                              |                          |
| 2. Has a love of teaching  | 4 (20%)                    | 7 (35%)                      | 11 (28%)                 |
| • enjoys/loves special education teaching                                | x                          | x                            |                          |
| 3. Is challenging  | 4 (20%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 4 (10%)                  |
| • finds it challenging to work with special needs students               | x                          |                              |                          |
| <b>B. Extrinsic Rewards</b>  |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Benefits  | 2 (10%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 4 (10%)                  |
| • likes MCS career ladder program  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • likes being a member of a teacher's union                              | x                          |                              |                          |
| • likes medical benefits   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • likes retirement benefits  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • can accumulate sick leave days   | x                          |                              |                          |
| 2. Likes salary  | 1 (5%)                     | 2 (10%)                      | 3 (8%)                   |
| • needs income to support family   |                            | x                            |                          |
| 3. Accrued Investments   | 3 (15%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 3 (8%)                   |
| • too much time invested   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • too difficult to change jobs   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • too much to lose   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • too close to retirement  | x                          |                              |                          |
| <b>C. Ancillary Rewards</b>  |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Enjoys work hours   | 4 (20%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 6 (15%)                  |
| • school hours give teacher time for other activities                    | x                          |                              |                          |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying  | Stayers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • gets off work early in the day   |                            | x                            |                          |
| • school schedule matches child's schedule   |                            | x                            |                          |
| 2. Enjoys summer vacation/holidays   | 4 (20%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 6 (15%)                  |
| • summer vacation allows for summer employment                                       | x                          |                              |                          |
| • predetermined holidays allow teacher to plan ahead                                 | x                          |                              |                          |
| 3. Has job security  | 1 (5%)                     | 2 (10%)                      | 3 (8%)                   |
| V. Preparation Factors   | 1 (5%)                     | 0 (0%)                       | 1 (3%)                   |
| • previous work experience helped prepare teacher for working with disabled students | x                          |                              |                          |
| VI. Personal/Change Factors  | 0 (0%)                     | 0 (0%)                       | 0 (0%)                   |
| VII. Other   | 3 (15%)                    | 5 (25%)                      | 8 (20%)                  |
| • administrators help with teacher transfers   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • principal allows special educators to take "mental health days"                    | x                          |                              |                          |
| • principal greets parents in the hallway  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • principal wants teacher to do his/her best   |                            | x                            |                          |
| • teacher believes that all students can learn                                       |                            | x                            |                          |
| • teacher has been "called to teach"   |                            | x                            |                          |
| • teacher wants to be a part of special education changes                            |                            | x                            |                          |
| • teacher needs students   |                            | x                            |                          |
| VIII. Non-categorizable  | 3 (15%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 7 (18%)                  |
| • MCS special education is "ahead of its time"                                       | x                          |                              |                          |
| • colleagues are competent   | x                          |                              |                          |
| • administrators are positive  | x                          |                              |                          |
| • principal is efficient at his/her job  |                            | x                            |                          |

(continued)

| Reasons for Staying                                     | Stayers         | Undecided       | Total           |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|   | (N=20)<br>N (%) | (N=20)<br>N (%) | (N=40)<br>N (%) |
| • supervisor helps with problems                        |                 | x               |                 |
| • faculty creates positive environment at school        |                 | x               |                 |
| • teacher has good working relationship with colleagues |                 | x               |                 |

\* Percents total more than 100 because of multiple responses to open-ended questions.

**Appendix H**

**Reasons for Wanting to Leave  
Special Education Teaching in MCS**

**Reasons for Wanting to Leave Special Education Teaching In the MCS**  
**(Percents based on Column Totals)**

| Reasons for Leaving   | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>(N=40)<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I. Support  |                            |                              |                          |
| A. Administrative Support   |                            |                              |                          |
| 1. Does not provide assistance to teachers  |                            |                              |                          |
| a. Does not help obtain appropriate programming and services for special education students | 8 (40%)                    | 9 (45%)                      | 17 (43%)                 |
| • does not appropriately place students   | x                          | x                            |                          |
| • does not provide necessary support services for students                                  |                            | x                            |                          |
| • does not encourage mainstreaming of special education students                            |                            | x                            |                          |
| • does not promote collaboration between MCS and the Mental Health Center                   |                            | x                            |                          |
| • does not attend M-team meetings   |                            | x                            |                          |
| b. Does not help with student discipline  | 4 (20%)                    | 5 (25%)                      | 9 (23%)                  |
| • does not develop effective discipline policies  | x                          | x                            |                          |
| c. Does not help with teacher transfers   | 4 (20%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 6 (15%)                  |
| • does not consider teacher's desires when placing in teaching positions                    |                            | x                            |                          |
| • transfers teachers involuntarily  | x                          | x                            |                          |

(continued)



| Reasons for Leaving  | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>N=40<br>N (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| d. Does not help resolve conflicts with other administrators and teachers                            | 2 (10%)                    | 3 (15%)                      | 5 (13%)                |
| • does not assist teacher in dealing with principal  |                            | x                            |                        |
| • does not help resolve existing racial tension among faculty  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| e. Does not help with obtaining instructional materials  | 2 (10%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 4 (10%)                |
| • does not give teacher access to available instructional materials                                  | x                          |                              |                        |
| • does not provide adequate funding for materials  |                            | x                            |                        |
| f. Does not help with reducing teacher's workload  | 2 (10%)                    | 1 (5%)                       | 3 (8%)                 |
| • does not help reduce teacher's large caseloads   | x                          |                              |                        |
| • does not help reduce teacher's large class sizes   |                            | x                            |                        |
| 2. Does not establish and maintain an effective communication system                                 |                            |                              |                        |
| a. Does not demonstrate/communicate knowledge of special education                                   | 13 (65%)                   | 9 (45%)                      | 22 (55%)               |
| • is not knowledgeable about special education policies  | x                          |                              |                        |
| • is not knowledgeable about current trends in special education                                     | x                          |                              |                        |
| • does not notify teachers of changes in special education forms                                     | x                          |                              |                        |
| • does not consistently implement special education policies   | x                          |                              |                        |
| • lacks knowledge of special educator's roles and responsibilities                                   | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • lacks knowledge about student disabilities   |                            | x                            |                        |
| • does not communicate information about special education policies to teachers/other administrators | x                          | x                            |                        |

(continued)

| Reasons for Leaving   | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>N=40<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lacks knowledge about instructional strategies to use with special education students</li> </ul> |                            | x                            |                        |
| b. Is inaccessible to teacher   | 2 (10%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 6 (15%)                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only contact with teacher is during evaluations</li> </ul>                                       | x                          |                              |                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not visit teacher's class</li> </ul>  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not return teacher's telephone calls</li> </ul>   | x                          | x                            |                        |
| 3. Does not facilitate staff development  |                            |                              |                        |
| a. Does not knowledgeable evaluate teachers   | 3 (15%)                    | 3 (15%)                      | 6 (15%)                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not provide positive feedback to teachers</li> </ul>  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not conduct teacher evaluation properly</li> </ul>  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| b. Does not provide opportunities for professional growth   | 4 (20%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 6 (15%)                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not obtain funding for teachers to attend professional conferences</li> </ul>               | x                          |                              |                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not conduct informative inservices</li> </ul>   | x                          | x                            |                        |
| 4. Does not treat teacher like a professional   |                            |                              |                        |
| a. Does not communicate respect for teacher   | 2 (10%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 2 (5%)                 |
| b. Does not give teacher input into decision making   | 2 (10%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 2 (5%)                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not allow teacher to make decisions over integrating disabled students</li> </ul>           | x                          |                              |                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not allow teacher input into paperwork issues</li> </ul>                                    | x                          |                              |                        |
| B. Colleague Support  |                            |                              |                        |
| 1. Does not help special education students be successful in their classrooms   | 5 (25%)                    | 7 (35%)                      | 12 (30%)               |

(continued)

| Reasons for Leaving  | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>N=40<br>N (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| • send special education students out of class instead of trying to work with them                       | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • does not attempt to deal with student problems   | x                          |                              |                        |
| • does not want special education students mainstreamed in their classes                                 | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • segregates special education students in their classes   |                            | x                            |                        |
| • does not spend as much time with special education students as they do with regular education students |                            | x                            |                        |
| • does not invite special education students to participate in school activities                         |                            | x                            |                        |
| • does not make modifications for special education students   |                            | x                            |                        |
| <b>2. Does not demonstrate/communicate understanding of special education</b>                            | <b>6 (30%)</b>             | <b>3 (15%)</b>               | <b>9 (23%)</b>         |
| • does not understand the purpose of special education   | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • does not understand the special educator's roles and responsibilities                                  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| <b>3. Does not provide assistance to special education teacher</b>                                       | <b>1 (5%)</b>              | <b>2 (10%)</b>               | <b>3 (8%)</b>          |
| • does not help with student scheduling  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| <b>C. Parent Support</b>   |                            |                              |                        |
| <b>1. Are not actively involved in their child's educational program</b>                                 | <b>7 (35%)</b>             | <b>3 (15%)</b>               | <b>10 (25%)</b>        |
| • does not reinforce skills that their child is learning at school                                       | x                          |                              |                        |
| • does not "follow through" with disciplining their children   | x                          |                              | /                      |
| • are inadequately trained to work with their child  | x                          |                              |                        |
| • does not attend special education meetings   | x                          |                              |                        |

(continued)

| Reasons for Leaving   | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>N=40<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 2. Lack of communication with teacher   | 2 (10%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 4 (10%)                |
| • has little contact with teacher   | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • does not discuss problems with teacher but instead goes directly to the principal | x                          |                              |                        |
| <b>II. Work Assignment</b>  |                            |                              |                        |
| <b>A. School Factors</b>  |                            |                              |                        |
| 1. Inadequate facilities  | 7 (35%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 9 (23%)                |
| • inadequate classroom space  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • teacher's instructional "space" is frequently moved                               | x                          |                              |                        |
| • untimely repairs and renovations on school building                               | x                          |                              |                        |
| • school facility not equipped for teaching instructional skills                    | x                          |                              |                        |
| • school facility is not accessible to disabled persons                             | x                          |                              |                        |
| • school is not air conditioned   |                            | x                            |                        |
| • school sometimes does not have heat   |                            | x                            |                        |
| 2. Poor location  | 3 (15%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 5 (13%)                |
| • school is not located near teacher's home   | x                          |                              |                        |
| • school is located in an area where students must be bussed in                     | x                          |                              |                        |
| • school is located in an unsafe neighborhood                                       | x                          | x                            |                        |
| <b>B. Role-design</b>   |                            |                              |                        |
| <b>1. Paperwork</b>   |                            |                              |                        |
| a. Is overwhelming  | 12 (60%)                   | 8 (40%)                      | 20 (50%)               |
| • too much paperwork  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • too much pressure to complete paperwork   | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • too time consuming  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • completes non-special education related paperwork, too                            | x                          |                              |                        |
| • too intimidating  | x                          |                              |                        |

(continued)

| Reasons for Leaving                                 | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>N=40<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| b. Is unnecessary                                   | 8 (40%)                    | 9 (45%)                      | 17 (43%)               |
| • is useless  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • is redundant                                      | x                          | x                            |                        |
| c. Interferes with teaching                         | 6 (30%)                    | 7 (35%)                      | 13 (33%)               |
| • takes away from teaching time                     | x                          | x                            |                        |
| d. Is inconsistent                                  | 3 (15%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 7 (18%)                |
| • is constantly changing                            | x                          | x                            |                        |
| 2. Lack of time                                     |                            |                              |                        |
| a. Lack of time to perform non-instructional duties | 12 (60%)                   | 8 (40%)                      | 20 (50%)               |
| • lack of time to complete paperwork                | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • lack of time to meet with parents                 | x                          |                              |                        |
| • lack of time to conduct M-team meetings           | x                          |                              |                        |
| • lack of time to take a break                      | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • lack of time to collaborate with colleagues       |                            | x                            |                        |
| b. Lack of time to perform instructional duties     | 6 (30%)                    | 6 (30%)                      | 12 (30%)               |
| • lack of time to individualize instruction         | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • lack of time to plan                              | x                          | x                            |                        |
| 3. Class size/caseload                              |                            |                              |                        |
| a. Too large caseload                               | 9 (45%)                    | 7 (35%)                      | 16 (40%)               |
| b. Too large class size                             | 7 (35%)                    | 5 (25%)                      | 12 (30%)               |
| 4. Class mix  | 6 (30%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 10 (25%)               |
| • has to teach multiple age ranges                  | x                          |                              |                        |
| • has to teach multiple exceptionality areas        | x                          |                              |                        |
| • has to teach multiple ability levels              | x                          | x                            |                        |

(continued)

| Reasons for Leaving   | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>N=40<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| • has to deal with multiple student problems  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • has to teach multiple grade levels  |                            | x                            |                        |
| 5. Non-teaching duties  | 0 (0%)                     | 2 (10%)                      | 2 (5%)                 |
| • has to attend too many meetings   |                            | x                            |                        |
| • has homeroom duty   |                            | x                            |                        |
| 6. Other  | 4 (20%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 4 (10%)                |
| • dislikes itinerant teaching position  | x                          |                              |                        |
| • wants to work with higher functioning students  | x                          |                              |                        |
| • position does not "match" teacher's background and experience                                       | x                          |                              |                        |
| <b>C. Resources</b>   |                            |                              |                        |
| <b>1. Inadequate instructional materials and equipment</b>  |                            |                              |                        |
| a. Inadequate funding for materials   | 9 (45%)                    | 7 (35%)                      | 16 (40%)               |
| • \$50.00 allotment for instructional materials is inadequate   | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • teacher must spend own money for instructional materials  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • teacher must use part of instructional allotment to purchase special education forms/basic supplies | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • teacher must raise money to buy instructional materials   | x                          |                              |                        |
| b. Inefficient instructional materials and equipment  | 7 (35%)                    | 5 (25%)                      | 12 (30%)               |
| • teacher's classroom had no materials at the beginning of the school year                            | x                          |                              |                        |
| • teacher must make instructional materials   | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • lack of access to school's instructional equipment  | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • school's instructional equipment does not work  | x                          |                              |                        |

(continued)

| Reasons for Leaving  | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>N=40<br>N (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| • teacher must share materials   | x                          |                              |                        |
| • teacher does not have textbooks for students                         |                            | x                            |                        |
| • materials at curriculum lab are inaccessible to teacher              |                            | x                            |                        |
| • teacher does not receive materials that are ordered                  |                            | x                            |                        |
| c. Existing materials are inappropriate for special education students | 4 (20%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 8 (20%)                |
| • teacher has to use outdated materials                                | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • materials are inappropriate for student ability levels               | x                          | x                            |                        |
| 2. Lack of personnel   |                            |                              |                        |
| a. Lack of assistants  | 7 (35%)                    | 4 (20%)                      | 11 (28%)               |
| • lack of qualified/trained assistants                                 | x                          | x                            |                        |
| b. Lack of teachers  | 2 (10%)                    | 1 (5%)                       | 3 (8%)                 |
| • lack of qualified special education teachers                         | x                          |                              |                        |
| III. Student Factors   |                            |                              |                        |
| A. Is Unable to Help Students  | 3 (15%)                    | 1 (5%)                       | 4 (10%)                |
| • is frustrated with students lack of progress                         | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • is unable to make a difference in students' futures                  | x                          |                              |                        |
| B. Dislikes Student Characteristics                                    | 2 (10%)                    | 1 (5%)                       | 3 (8%)                 |
| • students are from low income families                                | x                          |                              |                        |
| • students are behavior problems                                       | x                          |                              |                        |
| • students are disrespectful to teacher                                | x                          |                              |                        |
| IV. Work Rewards   |                            |                              |                        |
| A. Intrinsic Rewards   |                            |                              |                        |
| 1. Has feelings of ineffectiveness                                     | 4 (20%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 6 (15%)                |

(continued)

| Reasons for Leaving   | Leavers<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Undecided<br>(N=20)<br>N (%) | Total<br>N=40<br>N (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 2. Lack of a challenge  | 2 (10%)                    | 0 (0%)                       | 2 (5%)                 |
| • feels that job is not challenging   | x                          |                              |                        |
| <b>B. Extrinsic Rewards</b>   |                            |                              |                        |
| 1. Inadequate salary  | 3 (15%)                    | 8 (40%)                      | 11 (28%)               |
| • salary is too low   | x                          |                              |                        |
| • teacher must work two jobs to pay bills   | x                          |                              |                        |
| • MCS teachers are paid less than teachers in surrounding counties                    | x                          |                              |                        |
| • salaries are not commensurate with special educator's job responsibilities          |                            | x                            |                        |
| • inadequate raises   |                            | x                            |                        |
| 2. Accrued investments  | 0 (0%)                     | 1 (5%)                       | 1 (3%)                 |
| • too close to retirement   | x                          |                              |                        |
| <b>V. Preparation Factors</b>   | 2 (10%)                    | 1 (5%)                       | 3 (8%)                 |
| • does not feel adequately trained to teach instructional skills for current position | x                          | x                            |                        |
| • does not feel adequately trained to work with parents from different cultures       | x                          |                              |                        |
| <b>VI. Personal/Change Factors</b>  |                            |                              |                        |
| A. Needs a change   | 3 (15%)                    | 2 (10%)                      | 5 (13%)                |
| • wants to pursue administrative position with MCS                                    | x                          |                              |                        |
| • wants to transfer to regular education teaching position                            |                            | x                            |                        |
| B. Family Reasons   | 1 (5%)                     | 0 (0%)                       | 1 (3%)                 |
| • teacher wants to stay home with family  | x                          |                              |                        |
| <b>VII. Other</b>   | 5 (25%)                    | 1 (5%)                       | 6 (15%)                |
| • lack of funding for field trips   | x                          |                              |                        |

(continued)



| <b>Reasons for Leaving</b> |   | <b>Leavers<br/>(N=20)<br/>N (%)</b> | <b>Undecided<br/>(N=20)<br/>N (%)</b> | <b>Total<br/>N=40<br/>N (%)</b> |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                            | • lack of access to paperwork/student records                         | x                                   |                                       |                                 |
|                            | • colleagues have poor attitudes toward teaching                      | x                                   |                                       |                                 |
|                            | • teachers have conflicting views about educational practices         | x                                   |                                       |                                 |
|                            | • lack of a special education curriculum                              | x                                   |                                       |                                 |
|                            | • principal does not compliment students                              |                                     | x                                     |                                 |
| VIII.                      | Non-categorizable   | 4 (20%)                             | 3 (15%)                               | 7 (18%)                         |
|                            | • lack of assistance to teacher                                       | x                                   |                                       |                                 |
|                            | • job is stressful  | x                                   |                                       |                                 |
|                            | • MCS is "behind the times"   | x                                   |                                       |                                 |
|                            | • teacher cannot make principal "happy"                               | x                                   |                                       |                                 |
|                            | • lack of funding for special education                               |                                     | x                                     |                                 |
|                            | • changes in program's operation                                      |                                     | x                                     |                                 |
|                            | • director of special education does not assist teacher with problems |                                     | x                                     |                                 |

\* Percents total more than 100 because of multiple responses to open-ended questions.

**Vita**

## MARY BETH HENDRICKS

### Vita

#### EDUCATION

- 1990 - 1992      Doctorate of Education, Special Education Administration and Supervision, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia
- 1992              Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies, Special Education Administration and Supervision, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia
- 1986              Master of Education, Special Education (Mental Retardation), Columbus College, Columbus, Georgia
- 1984              Bachelor of Arts, Special Education (Learning Disabilities), LaGrange College, LaGrange, Georgia (*summa cum laude*)

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Fall 1992              Instructor, Bethel College, McKenzie, TN
- Responsibilities: teaching graduate and undergraduate level courses in a teacher preparation program; advising undergraduate students; assisting graduate students with problem papers; and serving as campus coordinator for the Teachers' Assistants Program
- Summer 1992          Consultant, Virginia Department of Education, Special Education Leadership Manual
- Responsibilities: reviewed various chapters on special education leadership; identified necessary content and editorial revisions to the chapters; conveyed these revisions to the chapters' authors; and conducted a final proofing of the manual.
- 1990 - 1992          Graduate assistant, Department of Special Education Administration and Supervision, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia
- Responsibilities: assisted professors with research endeavors; wrote and presented parent involvement module for graduate class instruction; lectured on special education teacher attrition and retention; wrote for state department special education manuals; and conducted extensive research on parent involvement and on special education teacher attrition and retention.

- 1991 Administrative intern, Montgomery County Public School System, Christiansburg, Virginia
- Responsibilities: assisted Director of Student Services with administrative duties; developed administrative handbook on integrating disabled students; assimilated teacher intervention strategies for ADHD students.
- 1988 - 1990 Self-contained readiness teacher (5 and 6 year olds), Roanoke City School System, Roanoke, Virginia
- Responsibilities: provided direct instruction to learning disabled (LD) students; co-chaired school-based child study committee; conducted educational assessments; and provided consultation to regular education teachers.
- 1985 - 1988 Noncategorical resource teacher (K-2), Opelika City Schools, Opelika, Alabama
- Responsibilities: provided direct instruction to emotionally disturbed (ED) and LD students; coordinated multidisciplinary team; served as educational diagnostician for school; interpreted educational evaluations for teachers and parents; and provided consultation to regular education teachers.
- 1984 - 1985 Noncategorical itinerant resource teacher (K-5), Troup County School System, LaGrange, Georgia
- Responsibilities: provided direct instruction to educable mentally handicapped (EMH), ED, and LD students; participated in student support teams; served as educational diagnostician for schools; interpreted educational evaluations for teachers and parents; and provided consultation to regular education teachers.

## **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Council for Exceptional Children  
 1991-92 Local chapter officer  
 Council for Exceptional Children  
 Council for Administrators of Special Education  
 The Division of Learning Disabilities  
 The Division on Mental Retardation  
 Teacher Education Division  
 National Education Association  
 Virginia Education Association  
 Phi Delta Kappa Honor Society  
 Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society  
 Omicron Delta Kappa Honor Society  
 Special Olympics

## **HONORS**

Malcolm E. Shackelford Education Award Recipient, LaGrange College (1984)  
Who's Who Among American Colleges and Universities

## **PUBLICATIONS**

Billingsley, B., B. Cline, M. Farley, & M. B. Hendricks (1990). Staff Development Manual for Special Educators. Virginia Department of Education, Special Education Program.

Billingsley, B., Pyecha, J., & M. B. Hendricks (1992). Year 1 Report: Improving the retention of special education teachers. Prepared for the Office of Special Education Programs, U. S. Department of Education.

## **SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION**

Billingsley, B., D. Bodkins, & M. B. Hendricks. Why special educators leave teaching: Implications for administrators. CASE in Point.

## **RESEARCH INVOLVEMENT**

Special education teacher attrition and retention in urban settings, 1991-present.

"Educational leadership for special education personnel", Virginia Department of Education, 1991.

Development of parent involvement teaching module for graduate course in supervision of special education, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1990.

"The staff development needs of special education teachers and related services personnel in Virginia", U.S. Department of Education, 1990.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

"Why special educators leave teaching: Implications for administrators", Council for Exceptional Children 70th Annual Convention, Baltimore, Maryland, April 1992 (with B. Billingsley).

## REFERENCES

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