

**ATTRITION AND RETENTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SELF-CONTAINED
TEACHERS: SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?**

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

STEPHEN ANTHONY ROUSSEAU, SSP

DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST 2011

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DENTON, TEXAS


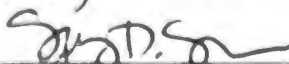
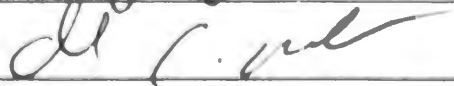
April 26, 2011

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Stephen Anthony Rousseau entitled "Attrition and Retention of Special Education Self-Contained Teachers: Should I Stay or Should I Go?" I have examined this Dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in School Psychology.


Kathy DeOrnellas, PhD, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance




Department Chair

Accepted:


Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

As I think back on this process, I was pondering the amount of time it took to complete this tome. I don't believe that pure numerical validation of hours would do justice to the Herculean amounts of effort it took to manifest the following text. Therefore, I think first and foremost this paper is dedicated to the sheer strength of will that it took to create it. With that said, I would like to dedicate this paper to all of those individuals that have helped or encouraged me through this really long process. To my wife, cat Sophie, family and the many vintners that kept me sane. I could never have gotten through this without you. Thank you so much for all you have done. So, now that Hell has truly frozen over, let us ponder better times. Cheers to all!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I consider my doctoral coursework, I really have a hard time putting into words how the process has impacted me. All I can say is: Wow! What a long and painful process this has been. It seems like several lifetimes have passed since I initially conceived this research project. For every time that I thought this process would never end, I had a friend providing me with encouragement and support to indicate the opposite. Among those chosen few, was my amazing wife LaDonna. She has been very patient and supportive. I don't think that she will ever know how important she was throughout this process. However, I look forward to the next 60 to 70 years to make it right. I also want to acknowledge my parents Stephen and Josephine for always instilling in me the importance of education. Even as a young child, they made it clear that I could do anything that I wanted to if I put my mind to it. I also want to thank Dr. DeOrnellas for not only agreeing to chair my dissertation, but also for standing up for me when things went terribly wrong. Of all the professors that I have encountered, none has been so invested in assuring that the needs of students are met. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Dr. Stabb, words cannot do justice to how much I appreciate your help through this journey. Many thanks for helping me to not completely melt down as the qualitative statistics had me running for the hills. Your guidance and calm voice will always be among the few pleasant memories associated with this grueling process. I truly would have been lost without your expertise.

Now for the acknowledgment of my social network: Oh my, how important my friends were in this process. Thank you Ken for being a great friend and for being willing at a moment's notice to cook with me and have a beverage or two or three. Thanks to Jackie for letting Ken do all of the above. To Carmen and Edwin I want to thank you for always being the voice of calm and a pillar of support through the graduate school storm. Your zest for life and the Texas Long Boarding excitement did wonders for my overall physical and mental wellbeing. To my friends Matt and Beth thank you for appreciating my grizzled sense of humor and recognizing the awesomeness of airline status! To my good friend Jennifer, your never ending optimism of my abilities to succeed has been an exceptional source of strength to me through this process. Anybody who willingly volunteers to cross code data is surely a really good friend. And last but certainly not least, Arthur. What can I say about this young little scalawag? Your knowledge, willingness to help and self deprecating humor have all been essential in keeping me floating at an even keel. You are truly a good man sir!

ABSTRACT

STEPHEN ANTHONY ROUSSEAU

ATTRITION AND RETENTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SELF-CONTAINED TEACHERS: SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

AUGUST 2011

The field of special education has emerged as an area of significant research over the last decade. One area that has been targeted for study within the body of research relates to the high rates of attrition of staff. With the advent of the federal legislation requiring school districts to locate and employ highly qualified teachers, the need to retain staff has come to the forefront. This study focused specifically on factors that may moderate the decision of special education teachers to stay in or vacate their self-contained special education teaching position. It was hypothesized that increased access to professional and paraprofessional staff, level of educational training, ability to successfully cope with stress, and salary would impact positively upon overall job satisfaction and intent to remain employed in self contained classrooms. For this study, educational staff teaching in Social Adjustment Classes, Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities, and Life Skills Classes were interviewed.

The results suggested that paraprofessional support had a moderate to high impact on self-contained teacher's outlook regarding ability to adequately provide services to students. However, only tentative conclusions could be drawn regarding the relationship

between paraprofessional support and teacher's intent to remain in their positions. Mixed results were obtained regarding the impact of educational training on job commitment. The benefits of formalized educational training were noted by participants, but were eclipsed by the perceived benefits of on the job training, targeted in-service opportunities and prior work experiences in the educational fields. In self-contained classrooms the most frequently reported stressors included working with challenging administrators, lack of relevant training and paperwork and legal requirements. The most significant moderating factors to these stressors included a collaborative relationship with campus administration and well trained paraprofessional staff willing to work cooperatively with self-contained teachers to educate students. The impacts of salary were also examined. Limited support was obtained for salary as an incentive to remain in self contained positions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
Chapter	
I: INTRODUCTION	1
Factors that Influence Retention and Attrition of Special Education Teachers	1
Definition of Terms	6
II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	10
Attrition and Retention Factors	10
Common Stress Factors	12
Demographic, Monetary, Educational Supports and Training Factors	19
Purpose of the Current Research	30
III: METHODS	32
Rationale for a Qualitative Study	32
Research Questions	33
Description of Setting	33
Program and Population	34
Participants	36
Demographic Data	37
Self of the Researcher	37

Conceptual Framework	39
Instrumentation.....	41
Procedures.....	42
Validity Check.....	50
 IV: RESULTS.....	 51
District Level Stressors and Insulators.....	51
District Stress Codes.....	52
District Insulators	56
Campus Level Stressors and Insulators.....	60
Campus Stress Codes	60
Campus Insulators	65
Classroom/Individual Level Stressors and Insulators	68
Classroom/Individual Stress Codes	69
Classroom/Individual Insulators.....	73
Data Analysis Summary.....	83
District Level Stress Codes.....	85
District Level Insulators.....	90
Campus Level Stressors.....	91
Campus Level Insulators	95
Classroom/Individual Level Stressors	96
Classroom/Individual Level Insulators.....	99
Hypotheses	102
Impact of Increased Paraprofessional and Other Professional Support	103
Administrative Support on Role Ambiguity and Retention.....	105
Impact of Salary.....	106
Level of Educational Training	106
Demographic Variables as Stressors and Insulators.....	107
 V: DISCUSSION	 113
Implication to the Field of Psychology	122
Future Directions	123
Conclusion	125
 REFERENCES	 126
 APPENDICES	
A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions	135

B: Recruitment Script and Consent Form	138
C: Coding Process	143
D: Codebook	189
F: IRB Approval Letter	197

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Conceptual Map.....	40
2. Frequency of Coding References.....	82

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Factors that Influence Retention and Attrition of Special Education Teachers

In the field of special education, a myriad of educational settings and staffing configurations exist. Although challenges in educating students exist in all special education settings, they are most prevalent in self-contained classrooms (Brownell, Smith, & McNellis, 1997). This subset of instructional environments serves students with the most severe physical, emotional, and mental challenges. Research suggests that behavioral and academic challenges in these classroom environments can create significant stress upon both staff and students (Brownell et al., 1997). The rates of attrition for this subset of instructional staff were among the highest of the research reviewed (Brownell et al., 1997). Not only are self-contained teaching staff particularly vulnerable to leaving the field, but the research also suggests that one third of the individuals surveyed would leave the profession within one year (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995).

Other studies suggest that rates of attrition are significantly higher in special education teachers when compared to regular education instructional staff (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985). It is important to note that two thirds of teachers of special education self-contained classrooms that chose to leave the profession are still employed in the field of education. They simply chose to vacate the special education position in favor of a

regular education teaching position (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985). Less than forty percent of all special education teachers remain in their positions for more than four years. A review of data associated with labor trends suggested that the number of special education teaching positions will increase by as much as 15% over the next 7 years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). However, districts report that even now they are having difficulty staffing current special education positions (Bureau of Labor Statistics). This further highlights the importance of determining the underlying factors that tend to impact career decision making for this segment of public education. Some initial findings related to the possible reasons for vacating the position include exposure to high levels of stress and increased levels of anxiety (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985).

The purpose of this study is to identify factors that relate to special education teachers' intent to remain employed in self-contained classroom arrangements. The importance of this study lies in Local Educational Agencies' need to provide continuity in care to students who require the highest levels of educational, emotional, and behavioral service (Dodge, Keenan & Lattanzi, 2002). Special education staff report that one of the most challenging aspects of instructing severely impaired students relates to establishing a sound relationship with their pupils. Because relationships and rapport building take times to establish, turnover in staff is ultimately detrimental to the educational development of this segment of students (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985).

The stressors placed on instructional staff are numerous and encompass not only how best to educate these students, but also how to provide them with opportunities to

associate with peers who are not disabled in mainstream settings (Dodge et al., 2002). Mainstream opportunities or inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education settings is not new to special education. However, resurgence in this practice has occurred in the last 10 years (Dodge et al., 2002). The intent of inclusion is to provide special needs student with opportunities to affiliate with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate and to facilitate greater exposure to the general education curriculum. This study will delve into the individuals' perceptions of their job and how the availability of special education and regular education resources can moderate their decision to retain or vacate their current position.

School districts across the country have been actively recruiting fully certified special education teachers for years, and have employed measures to increase retention rates for these staff members. Recruiting and retention policies have relied heavily on increasing salaries and continuing education opportunities (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985). However, these procedures have met with limited success in stemming the attrition tide. Current research indicates that one third of all special education teachers leave within the first three years of beginning their job. The numbers increase to fifty percent by the fifth year of teaching (Suell & Piotrowski, 2007). Other studies suggest that 60% of special education teachers vacate their positions within their first four years (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985). This number is significant considering the ever decreasing numbers of perspective teachers entering special education preparatory programs (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). With high rates of attrition and a diminishing pool of highly qualified teachers, the quality of

instruction to one of the neediest populations is most certainly in question. The proposed study will investigate and attempt to uncover additional facts that may assist special education employers in retaining highly qualified staff.

Special education programs and the differing manners in which instruction is provided to students is complex. Programs and instructional arrangements can range from minimal amounts of service provided in general education classrooms to self-contained or specialized, small group settings. Students in self-contained classes receive specialized instruction for greater than 60% of their instructional day in a small group arrangement, and the students are removed from the general population during this instructional time (Commissioners Rules of Texas, 2007). In general, special needs students in self-contained classrooms receive specialized instruction based on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Instruction must encompass all core content areas, unless the student's IEP indicates that alterations or modifications in the curriculum content are appropriate. The level of modification is dependent upon the severity of the student's disability. The ability of special education staff to identify the individual needs of the student and the extent to which modifications to the curriculum are needed can compound the levels of stress inherent to special education instruction.

The challenges for school districts to acquire and retain highly qualified teachers in self-contained teaching positions are compounded by decreasing numbers of individuals enrolling in and completing special education training programs (Brownell & Smith, 1992). Not only has the candidate pool continued to decrease, but those entering

the programs report initial dissatisfaction with their career path decisions (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985). These two factors are interesting in that perceived job satisfaction and lack of alternative career paths have been indicated as precursors to burnout (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). These research findings beg the question of how crucial is it to alter the perceptions of potential candidates in the field of special education instruction. Factors that lead to these negative perceptions should be identified and investigated. Along with the decreasing pool of highly qualified teachers, the ever-growing numbers of special education students have forced school districts to increase class sizes of existing staff (National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, 1995). These additional stressors pose an inherent problem in retaining qualified teachers within this career. Without a clear understanding of why highly qualified teachers vacate these crucial instructional positions, the students with the greatest needs are relegated to over-crowded classrooms and sub-par instruction. More specifically, vacated positions are more frequently being filled by individuals with little or no training (Olivarez & Arnold, 2006).

When attempting to determine factors that relate to attrition and retention, it becomes necessary to examine reasons why individuals enter the field. Perceptions of stressors that may influence their choices to exit the field or find positions in other subsections of education is also key to understanding factors related to attrition. The literature reviewed suggests a myriad of factors that could potentially bolster retention rates and attribute to attrition. Therefore, the literature on factors related to attrition and retention will be examined and incorporated into the broader concept of job satisfaction.

This will assist in developing a framework by which the topic can be narrowed to sub-factors that may encompass the broader term.

For the purpose of this study, the sub-factors will be limited to access to professional and paraprofessional staff, administrative support, materials and supplies, perceived levels of stress and coping, level of educational training, and salary. The influence of demographic factors will also be explored. According to a north Texas school district human resources department, professional and paraprofessional staff is broadly defined as personnel that either directly or indirectly provide support in the performance of the educational services. Examples of direct care staff include but are not limited to classroom aides, support service personnel such as counselors, psychologists, and academic and behavioral specialists. Indirect professional and paraprofessional staff includes campus and district level administrators, mentors, and supervisors. Demographic factors such as race and gender will also be examined to determine if they have a significant influence on retention and attrition factors. Finally, issues related to salary and level of educational training will be reviewed to ascertain the possible effects on self-contained teacher's decision to remain in their current occupation.

Definition of Terms

In order to assist in clarifying the concepts presented in this study a brief review of the terms is provided.

Self-Contained Classrooms: In general, self-contained classrooms are specialized small group instructional arrangements intended to provide instructional services to students who are unable to benefit substantially from instruction in regular education settings (Commissioners Rules Texas, 2007). There are two broad factors that distinguish self-contained classrooms from other instructional arrangements: the extent of time the student is removed from the general education curriculum and the level of modification to the core academic/education curriculum.

Attrition: Attrition as it applies to this study relates to a special education teacher's decision to vacate his or her teaching position (Billingsley, 2004). However, as Billingsley points out, there are multiple types of attrition. For example, if a teacher remains in the education field but transfers to a regular education teaching position, this was also considered to be a loss of special education staff. Even though the individual remains in the education field, their transfer results in a vacated special education position (Billingsley, 2004).

Retention: Retention is defined as a teacher who remains in the same teaching position as the prior year. However, much like the concept of attrition, retention is best conceptualized as existing on a continuum. Retention can refer to a teacher who remains in the same position in the same educational facility or in a special education position in a different school or educational setting (Billingsley, 2004).

Burnout: The term burnout has been defined in multiple ways by multiple researchers. It was first coined by Freudenberger in the late 1970's. It referred to an individual who was substantially unhappy with his or her occupational choice (Freudenberger, 1977). The definition that will apply best to this study is ongoing or persistent occurrence of job related stress that contributes substantially to an individual's decision to vacate an occupation (Freudenberger, 1977). Other research adds the component of an individual's inability to deal effectively with occupational or external stressors to the definition of burnout (Greer & Greer, 1992). Symptoms commonly associated with burnout included irritability, fatigue, frustration, and anger (Gold, 1989). These symptoms left unchecked were indicated to be precursors to burnout (Gold, 1989).

Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction is a term that is related to an individual's perceived level of satisfaction with their current occupational choice (Davis, 1988; as cited in Gökta, Z. 2007). In earlier literature, the focus of job satisfaction related to the actual positive aspects of a job versus the aspects of a job the employee desires to have (Locke, 1969 as cited in Schulz & Teddlie, 1989). Job satisfaction in current literature has focused on an individual's attitude toward the aspects or expectations of the job and the actual working conditions (Fuming & Jiliang, 2007).

Job Dissatisfaction: Job dissatisfaction is primarily focused on an individual's recognition of undesirable aspects of a given occupation choice that is magnified by a perceived inability to impact positive change on those identified negative conditions (Greer & Greer, 1992).

Professional and Paraprofessional Staff: According to one north Texas human resources department, professional and paraprofessional staff is broadly defined as personnel that either directly or indirectly provide support in the performance of educational services. This term excludes certified teachers that currently serve in that role. Examples of direct care staff include but are not limited to classroom aides, support service personal such as counselors, psychologists, and academic and behavioral specialists. Indirect professional and paraprofessional staff includes campus and district level administrators, mentors, and supervisors.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Attrition and Retention Factors

A review of literature focusing uncovering stressors and insulators to stress associated with the field of teaching was conducted. Within the course of this review, links between stress and attrition rates were examined. This section also focused on the impacts of prolonged exposure to stress on teachers, common stressors within the teaching profession and the impact of these stressors on their decision to remain in or vacate their current positions. Along with a review of common stressors in the field of education, factors that may insulate teaching staff to the daily pressures were also examined.

When investigating issues related to attrition of special education teachers, the concept of job satisfaction emerges. The research is littered with information that suggests a positive correlation between perceived levels of stress by staff and their decision to vacate their positions (Sutton & Huberty, 1984). This correlation continues to be represented in more recent work by Zabel and Zabel (2001) and Morgan and Reinhart (1985). Their findings demonstrate a consistent link between stress and attrition rates (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985). Common stressors reported included high levels of interaction with challenging students, workload, stringent timelines, lack of perceived successes, and goal dissonance (Weiskopf, 1980). Goal dissonance was a term used to

describe the mismatch between a teacher's belief in how effective they could be in creating positive change in students and actual change. These findings were reiterated in the work of Thorton, Peltier and Medina (2007). They indicated that not only do issues of workload and working conditions impact intentions to vacate, but lack of perceived collegial and administrator support also play a role (Thorton et al., 2007).

More recent findings continue to support that expectations of the teachers related to student performance can impact significantly on overall levels of stress (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). This particular facet of the research has sparked an ongoing debate related to how best to promote positive and appropriate expectations related to student success. The research also indicated that teachers of lower performing students had higher levels of job dissatisfaction (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). This suggests that the perception of the instructional staff's ability to promote positive change in students is inextricably linked to overall job satisfaction.

Significantly higher rates of job dissatisfaction were noted for instructional staff working with emotionally disturbed students (Abelson, 1986). This subset of teachers also ranked their levels of job related stress higher than staff that worked with children in the other categories of disability (Abelson, 1986). The challenge in working with this subset of students related significantly to the frequency and intensity of behavioral challenges that arise in the classroom. Prolonged exposure to job related stress can result in an overall reduction in the individual's ability to adapt and effectively cope with presenting challenges (Selye, 1956). The work of Selye over fifty years ago still holds

significant relevance to understanding the current challenges of special education teachers. The importance of building the staff's capacity to effectively address the needs of challenging students is the first step in improving retention rates of qualified teachers (Dodge, Keenan, & Lattanzi, 2002).

When attempting to discern factors related to attrition and retention, the notion of length of exposure to the stressors should be considered. The research suggested that years of exposure to job related stressors might not be the most significant factor related to attrition. Studying this particular facet of retention and attrition is problematic. This is due to the fact that staff may not remain in a highly stressful position for any significant length of time (Zabel & Zabel, 2001) and (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985). Given this particular confound, the available research did indicate that teachers with fewer years of experience had a tendency to report greater levels of job dissatisfaction (Shreeve et al., 1986). New teaching staff also has a higher probability of vacating their positions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007; Singer, 1992). This information highlights the need to focus efforts on not only identifying specific stressors associated with educating special needs children, but also determining what types of training and supports could be utilized to effect positive change on retention of staff.

Common Stress Factors

Although the challenges and potential stressors facing special education instructional staff are many and varied, some common factors did emerge from the literature. Four factors that will be reviewed include attributes of the students, availability

of student information, availability of suitable educational materials and the teacher's role in staff training (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). All four factors were listed as areas of potential stress and distress for special education teaching staff.

Attributes of the students. Increased work frustration was related to daily interaction with students who demonstrate high levels of inconsistency in behavioral and academic responding, lack of motivation, poor prognosis, and uncooperativeness (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). It is also important to note that newly entering teachers to the field tend to express the least amount of confidence in their ability to manage disruptive and out of control children (Olivarez & Arnold, 2004). As a staff member's perceived ability to cope with presenting challenges decreases, the perceived levels of stress and frustration increase. Therefore, classroom management and discipline do play a role in teachers' decisions to vacate their positions (Barton, 2001). Research has also shown that as the student's behavioral challenges become more pronounced, the focus becomes less on academics and more on how to de-escalate the presenting behaviors. This altering of focus creates a disconnect between the instructional staff's need to manage the behaviors of the student and Local Educational Agency (LEA) or School District's requirements for teachers to document academic progress.

High levels of frustration were associated with the instructional staffs' inability to promote positive change for their students or recognize when small change had occurred (Evans, 1997). This continues to present as a challenge in modern education. Teachers often require assistance in setting up methods of collecting data to assist in documenting

progress. One method of remediating this particular challenge is to increase the involvement of school psychologists (Dodge et al., 2002). School psychologists are trained in the art of operationally defining behaviors. Through this process, school psychologists can assist instructional staff members to identify measurable behaviors that can be tracked. Re-conceptualization of what constitutes positive change or behavioral growth is a key to remediating this particular source of stress. Although data collection is one means of fostering re-conceptualization of a student's behavior, it is not the only way. For example, one study explored the idea of cooperative learning and teaching as a means of educating students on the basis of their particular strengths (Dodge et al., 2002). Focusing on and clearly defining the child's academic and behavioral assets provided instructional staff with a starting point for provision of appropriate instruction and data collection.

Although students from diverse cultural backgrounds have increased significantly over the past decade, the makeup of instructional staff has remained nearly unchanged (Thorton et al., 2007). Washington D.C. and Hawaii were the only two states listed as having a proportionate number of minority teachers to minority students (Haberman, 2005). According to the National Center on Educational Statistics, ninety percent of all teaching staff is White non-Hispanic, six percent is Black and four percent is of other racial descent (NCES, 2003). The literature also suggested that the lack of diversity in the ethnic makeup of staff can create difficulty in providing salient instruction to special needs students. More specifically, the inability of school districts to match culturally

competent instructional staff to the diversity of the population in the school setting has been linked to over-representation of minority students in special education programs and intolerance of diversity by staff (Rice & Goessling, 2005). The disconnection between the cultural experiences of teachers and the students that they serve was listed as a prominent stressor. High levels of stress were also associated with classroom teachers who were unable to foster relationships or connections with the students they teach (Haberman, 2005). This lack of connection tended to result in more frequent discipline problems and greater difficulty keeping students on task.

Continued exposure to these stressors in the absence of appropriate coping strategies can lead to burnout. With this in mind, teachers were compared to other health care providers, such as doctors, in regards to high levels of burn out rates within the first three years of practice (Plash & Piotrowski, 2006). Emotional exhaustion and feelings of depersonalization were listed as the primary effects preceding burnout.

Availability of student information. The second factor related to increased stress in teachers is the availability of relevant information on each of the students to assist in generating appropriate instructional goals and objectives (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). Incomplete educational and clinical histories, etiology, and information on multiple disabilities were listed as points of frustration (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). Case history information was often described as failing to adequately describe the current needs of the student. Incomplete data related to the students appeared to compound the already difficult task of providing appropriate instruction to the student. This dearth of

information to assist in planning for the appropriate education of the student can contribute to role ambiguity, a contributing factor in burnout (Plash & Piotrowski, 2006). The amount of time that is often dedicated to this and other special education paperwork figured prominently as an additional stressor related to vacating teaching positions.

Availability of materials. The third factor was related to lack of appropriate classroom materials for students with severe disabilities. Although there are numerous programs, manipulatives, and materials for special needs students, the materials are often un-useable in their out-of-the-box formats (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). Materials often have to be modified to meet the needs of the students (Billingsley & Tomchin, 1992). This places additional pressure on the staff to find time to modify the curriculum for their population. Access to other professionals or staff members experienced in utilizing or modifying these materials was listed as a potential support for special education staff. A consistent point of frustration for special education staff is a lack of time to adequately prepare instructional lessons for their students. Therefore, the theme of training and support continues to emerge within a multitude of factors related to stress in this field.

Special education teachers are frequently placed in the position of having to compete with regular education staff for access to these resources (Kaufhold, Alvarez, & Arnold, 2006). Not only is there a disparity in how materials are distributed, but oftentimes special educators are placed in positions of having to solicit donations during their personal time (Macdonald & Spence, 2001). This problem is compounded by reports of teachers having to pay out of pocket for supplies and materials (Abel & Sewell,

1999). Although federal dollars are available to LEA's in the support of students with disabilities, these funds are often insufficient or distributed in less than efficient ways (Kaufhold et al., 2006). The current federal guidelines prohibit the use of federal dollars for consumable items such as stickers, tokens, or edibles, which are often integrated into the classroom behavioral management system (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004).

Administrative support is a crucial component in effectively resolving material and supply issues. Administrators/Principals are the instructional leaders of the campus and therefore charged with the responsibility of providing appropriate educational services to all students (Jennings & Mitylene, 2005). However, without an adequate understanding of the special needs of self-contained classrooms, special education teachers are often left to fend for themselves. These feelings of isolation and abandonment have been related to increasing feelings of stress and decreasing feelings of appreciation by special education teaching staff (Jennings & Mitylene, 2003). Teachers with fewer years of experience are especially susceptible to feelings of isolation. One study explained that teachers with less than five years of experience tend to report lower levels of support by their administrators (Otto & Arnold, 2005). They explained that not only do beginning teachers report lower levels perceived administrator support, but also may wrongly attribute their stress to failings of the administration (Otto & Arnold, 2005). As teachers gain experience they tend to have a better understanding of the role of administrators and how to navigate the school system to affect positive change in their work environment (Otto & Arnold, 2005).

Staff training demands. The final factor was related to the increased demands placed on special education staff in the area of staff training. Staff training refers to training received and/or provided by the special education staff. With the advent of nationally recognized accountability standards for special educators, staff requirements for training have become more rigid (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). There are pros and cons to providing recognized standards related to training. It does insure that this important facet of teacher preparation is completed, but may hinder other types of training that are also perceived as useful to the staff. Formalized training may or may not meet the needs of the individual. Fore, Martin, and Bender (2002) found that some special education staff considered it more beneficial to directly observe model programs and consult with other teachers in the field as opposed to attending formal in-service meetings.

Not only are special education teachers required to receive ongoing continuing education, but they are asked to train their aides and paraprofessionals in methodologies that are appropriate for the given program (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). This additional job responsibility appears counterintuitive considering that the staff report significant stress related to their own levels of under-preparedness (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). Not only are they responsible for the needs of their staff, but they are also placed in the role of providing advice and support to parents of special needs students (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). There is significant consensus within the literature that greater levels of training are important. However, the type of or method in which training is delivered is hotly contested. There has been a push in several states to require highly qualified special

education teachers to first receive core instruction as a generalist (Morgan & Reinhart, 1985). A generalist is specifically trained in regular education core curricular instructional methods. However, these high expectations have given way to greater reliance on alternative teacher education programs (Suell & Piotrowski, 2007). As previously mentioned, these hard-to-fill positions are often filled by individuals with minimal levels of training. Therefore, as the paradigm shifts in an attempt to fill vacant positions, the need for more formalized staff training and oversight becomes crucial.

Demographic, Monetary, Educational Supports and Training Factors

The following sections of this review will examine the possible impacts of demographic factors such as ethnicity, age and gender on retention and attrition of special education teachers. Other factors such as years of experience, salary, training experiences, access to paraprofessional staff and level of administrative support will also be addressed.

Ethnicity. A review of the research provides a broad range of views of the impact of demographic factors on rates of job satisfaction and attrition within the field of special education. In order to obtain a clearer view of the impact of demographic factors, it is important to first gain some understating of the general make up of special education employees. The research suggested that the majority of individuals providing instruction in special education were White non-Hispanic women. Some estimates place White non-Hispanic special education teachers as composing as high as eighty-six percent of the total field (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). It is also important to note that White non-

Hispanic women make up as high as ninety-five percent of the total field of special educators. The disproportionate number of men to women was primarily related to perceived low social status of the job, low salary, gender bias, potential for accusations of impropriety, and limited access to same sex peers (Rice & Goessling, 2005). Qualified minority teachers are underrepresented in the teaching profession as a whole (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Several issues were linked to this finding. The first is access to college training programs. The research indicated that entrance exams for teacher education programs have higher fail rates for minority students (Hornick-Lockard, 2008).

The second factor is related to the perceived low status associated with the teaching profession as a whole. Not only are there barriers to minorities entering the field, but, if they choose to remain in the field, social pressures to exit are present (Hornick-Lockard, 2008). As cited earlier in this study, Non-Hispanic White women were identified as the ethnic group that accounts for greater than 50% of the total population of teachers (Rice & Goessling, 2005). Although race was indicated to impact job satisfaction, contributing factors were noted to attenuate the results. Factors such as socioeconomic status (SES) and access to formal teacher educational programs may have significantly impacted upon the results (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). The systemic pressures of academia and social pressures must be taken into consideration.

However, with this in mind, the research data continues to point to the relationships between race, job satisfaction, and professional commitment (Hornick-Lockard, 2008). Minority teaching staff are presented with a significant challenge in

navigating a system that is based on standards and practices set forth by a European-American culture (Haberman, 2005). Therefore, curriculum standards may not reflect the needs or special challenges of an increasingly diverse population of students. This stressor, in addition to systemic pressures for Black teachers to be cultural ambassadors, was cited as a reason for current attrition rates (Haberman, 2005). Black teachers describe frustration related to their perceived duty to provide a global minority perspective in a White-dominated system (Haberman, 2005).

Results related to the impact of ethnicity on job satisfaction are tentative at best due to the multitude of potential intervening variables (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Specifically, the research indicated that minority teachers were more likely to be delivering service in inner-city schools. This finding was reiterated in a study of inner-city teachers in North Carolina. However, the author pointed out that results related to race and attrition may be clouded by other factors associated with educating students in inner city areas (Serve, 2006). The National Center for Educational Statistics, reported that schools with populations of fifty percent or greater minority students have two times more turnover than campuses with fewer minority students (NCES, 1998). More specifically, schools in these areas tended to be harder to staff due to poor working conditions and a higher density of special needs students. Therefore, these environments tend to be more difficult and may not be comparable to other educational venues (NCES, 1998).

Age, experience, and gender. Age and gender were also reviewed to determine the potential impacts of these two factors on job satisfaction. Again it is important to note that the studies contained samples that were primarily composed of White non-Hispanic women. The overwhelming data suggested that gender and age do not significantly impact upon the individual's decision to remain or vacate the positions. However, some interesting points related to these two demographic factors did emerge.

The variable of age was reviewed to determine the potential effects of this variable on job satisfaction and commitment to remain in a given field. The impact of age on attrition and retention rates of special educators is one of the few factors that was consistently linked with attrition (Billingsley, 2004). More specifically, younger teachers more frequently reported an intent to leave and tended to vacate special education positions at higher rates than older teaching professionals. Miller, Brownell and Smith (1999) noted that teachers under the age of 35 were more likely to vacate their positions than more mature staff. Attrition rates for younger teachers were reported to be twice as high as those for staff over the age of 35 (Billingsley, 2004).

It is important to note that age may be less salient than years of experience (Olivarez & Arnold, 2006). The concept of decreasing occupational options with age and higher levels of investment in an occupation were listed as moderating factors on job satisfaction and decision to retain current employment (Parasuraman & Nachman, 1987). Although consistent findings were noted in the area of age as a predictor of commitment, the rationale for this finding was varied. Some studies suggest that the relationship is

based on the individual's accumulated experience in a particular field of employment (Dornstein & Matalon, 1989). It was implied that as experience increases the level of confidence and competency within a given field moderates upon the decision to remain in a given occupation (Dornstein & Matalon, 1989).

Another interesting factor that emerged from this area of research related to the U-shaped attrition curve. As indicated previously, attrition rates tended to be significantly higher for younger teachers, but tended to drop off as age increased. However, as teachers get closer to the age of retirement levels of job dissatisfaction tended to increase again (Billingsley, 2004). This suggests that age and years of teaching experience are inextricably linked. Therefore, teacher's perceptions of their occupational choice are also effected by years of service.

The third demographic factor reviewed in this study is gender. Again it is important to note the dearth of literature on the impacts of gender in the field of special education. Of the studies that were reviewed, limited impacts of gender on either the intent to stay or attrition of special education teachers was noted (Billingsley, 2004). However, the broader literature does provide a wealth of studies on the impacts of gender on retention and attrition. The research indicates variability in the impact of gender on levels of commitment to an occupational choice. Some studies suggest that women exhibit higher levels of commitment to their jobs (Angle & Perry, 1981). Several rationales were provided for this particular result. The first hypothesis related to the disparity in occupational obstacles for women. The research indicated that women are

more likely to encounter discriminatory factors in not only hiring but also in attempting to obtain equivalent training opportunities (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982).

Overcoming these obstacles was related to higher levels of commitment to the chosen field of employment. However, recent trends suggest growing levels of labor force equality between men and women (Miller et al., 1999).

Although evidence related to the higher rates of retention of women in special education teaching roles exists, contradictory findings were also noted. The research revealed that the rates of women leaving the teaching profession are higher than that of male teachers (Singer, 1992). Some potential reasons for this disparity included factors outside of the position and less than desirable teaching conditions (Brownell & Smith, 1992). Personal factors such as access to better career alternatives, pregnancy, health issues, and provider status within the family unit were among the most salient factors (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Maislin, 1999). In relation to better career alternatives, those individuals that had the highest levels of certification and training also tended to have higher levels of attrition. However, it is important to note that these teachers did not tend to leave the field of special education. Rather they tended to be more mobile, and sought out better working conditions within the field (Billingsley, 2004). Other potential factors that may have attenuated the results obtained included male teachers' ability to compartmentalize and depersonalize from stress related factors inherent in the position (Crane & Iwanicki, 1986). However, it is important to note that

limited agreement on biological factors associated with retention and attrition are prevalent in the literature.

Eichinger (2000) suggests that the biological aspects of men versus women play a lesser role than that of individuals being socialized in the dichotomous roles of men versus women. Individuals that possess higher levels of androgynous traits are likely to demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction (Eichinger, 2000). Individuals that have acquired a spectrum of traits associated with masculinity and femininity are less likely to experience burnout (Eichinger, 2000). This finding was especially relevant considering that the female special education teachers in the Eichinger study reported significantly higher levels of stress than their male counterparts.

Salary and educational training. As with many of the factors addressed within this research study, significant variability was noted on the impacts of salary and educational training on special education teachers' decision to remain in or vacate their positions. Based on the labor statistics published in 2008, the median wages for special education teachers across elementary, middle, and high school settings ranged from \$46,360 to \$48,330 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). There was conflicting evidence regarding the relationship between salary and position retention. For example, Mark and Anderson (1985) found that as the level of beginning salary increased the rate at which teachers were retained also increased. However, other researchers suggested that there was no link between the variable of salary and an individual's decision or intent to remain in a position (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004). It is important to note that

work climate was deemed to be a moderating factor in most studies that failed to find a link between salary and intention to remain in a given position (Billingsley et al., 2004). Other moderating factors such as established work relationships, retirement plans, and other position related skills tended to weigh more heavily on decisions to remain in a position as opposed to salary (Reichers, 1985).

Cegelka and Doorlag (1995) provide a substantial amount of data to support a link between higher levels of educational preparation with retention of teachers. It is also important to note that all fifty states require that special education teachers be licensed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Teachers who are fully credentialed by their given state or accrediting organizations tend to rate their level of skill as higher than those that are not credentialed (Cegelka & Doorlag, 1995). This finding is significant in that as the level of perceived inability to function within the given job increases, so do rates of attrition (Menlove, Ganes, & Salzberg, 2003). Increasing levels of training can serve as a stop-gap measure in reducing the overall levels of stress and pressures that are inherent in the position (Menlove et al., 2003).

Access to professional and paraprofessional staff. There are many ways in which professional and paraprofessional staff may impact upon an individual's decision to remain in or leave her or his position. However, for the purpose of this study the focus will remain on the potential impact of direct assistance in the performance of classroom duties, indirect assistance via mentoring, and access to administrative support.

The research is somewhat barren in the area of the impact of additional assistance or direct professional and paraprofessional staff support in the classroom. However, some researchers have found evidence that when the demands of the position exceed the individual's resources, stress emerges (Billingsley et al., 2004). This increase in stress was linked to job dissatisfaction and increased levels of attrition (Feidman-Nemser, 2003). Therefore, a tentative link can be drawn between increased levels of support in performing duties that are considered ancillary to the position and level of job satisfaction (Menlove et al., 2003). The use of paraprofessionals to assist in some of the clerical and paperwork duties were listed as one example of how professional and paraprofessional staff could moderate levels of stress on the classroom teacher (Menlove et al., 2003). Overall, role responsibilities and utilization of paraprofessionals is an area that has received limited attention in the literature that was reviewed.

Two areas of indirect staff support that have received more attention in the literature included the utilization of mentoring programs for special education teachers and the concept of administrative support. When reviewing the concept of mentoring, it is important to distinguish between two variations in this form of support. Formal mentoring is viewed as a regularly scheduled meeting with a senior level teacher for the purposes of reviewing and generating feedback on a specific set of criteria (Billingsley et al., 2004). The criteria include but are not limited to classroom management, presentation of instructional lessons, documentation such as lesson plans and grading systems, and overall interaction style with the students (Billingsley et al., 2004).

Informal mentoring is initiated by the new teacher on issues that he or she deems as areas in need of remediation. No formal schedule of service is delineated and feedback received is either accepted or rejected by the teacher (Billingsley et al., 2004). The results of the research suggest that access to informal mentoring is viewed as more helpful in moderating job related stressors (Billingsley et al., 2004). Access to this support reduces dissonance between what are viewed as manageable and unmanageable aspects of the job.

Level of administrative support. Level of administrative support was another issue that appears to moderate the individual's decision to remain in or vacate a teaching position. Administrative intervention appears to impact on two key areas related to attrition and retention. The first factor included the administrator's ability to provide a clear delineation of the role responsibility of the teacher. As the level of role ambiguity increases the level of stress and dissatisfaction also increases (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). This dissatisfaction in turn is linked to decreased levels of job commitment. The links between role confusion and decreased overall levels of job satisfaction continue to be supported within the current literature (Gersten, Keating, Yonvanof, & Harniss, 2001). Moreover, teachers who perceived a higher level of administrative support tended to report fewer role confusion issues and decreased levels of overall stress (Gersten et al., 2001).

The second administrative factor related to retention and attrition involves perceived levels of support. Administrators that are deemed to be supportive by teaching

staff tend to generate higher levels of job commitment (Rosenholtz, 1989). Support was defined as provision of feedback to the staff, collaborative problem solving and decision making, acknowledging staff needs, and utilizing encouragement (Rosenholtz, 1989). These findings were reiterated in the work of Otto and Arnold (2005). Teachers were noted to perceive administrative support as an incentive for remaining in their position (Otto & Arnold, 2005). The application of administrative support appears to have significant effects on moderating levels of stress in staff and reducing attrition (Parasuraman & Nachman, 1987). Additional administrative supports that serve as insulating factors against stress included awareness and sensitivity to special education teacher's additional duties such as excessive time in meetings, lack of resources, and paperwork (Gersten et al., 2001). Special education teachers reported that administrators who provided access to clerical help and who provided opportunities throughout the school day to plan lessons and complete paperwork were considered to offer significant support (Paperwork in Special Education, 2002).

As this review of the literature indicates, there are truly a multitude of factors that can impact upon an individual's level of stress and ultimately upon their decision to leave the teaching field. Although the factors are numerous, the common thread appears to relate to educational and personal experiences, perceived levels of support, working conditions, and an individual's ability to impact positive change for the children they serve. This review reveals a strong need for educational systems to be more efficient in the manner that resources are utilized. The application of individualized support for

teachers in the classrooms appears to be the key to promoting retention (Menlove et al., 2003). Not only do schools need materials and supplies, but they also require staff who can relate to the population they serve (Haberman, 2005). Relationships take time, which makes appropriate staffing decisions even more crucial.

Purpose of the Current Research

The primary purpose of the current research is to gather interview data on the perceived effects of access to additional staff as a means of moderating overall stress and rates of attrition. It is hypothesized that increased access to professional and paraprofessional staff, gender and age, level of educational training, ability to successfully cope with stress, and salary will impact upon overall job satisfaction and intent to remain employed in self-contained classrooms. This study will be limited to interviews of educational staff currently teaching in Social Adjustment Classes, Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities and Life Skills Classes. The concept of coping and stress will also be addressed via open ended interview questions. Level of educational training and salary will also be examined. Based on the literature review it is expected that level of educational training will likely yield results that correlate positively with intention to remain in their current position. The factor of salary is also likely to impact heavily on level of commitment to the current occupational choice. Finally, the effects of ethnicity and gender on self-contained special education teaching populations will be examined. Specifically, participants will be asked open ended questions related to their beliefs regarding potential influences of gender and culture on current levels of

perceived job satisfaction. Although many studies have been conducted in the broader area of special education, few have targeted the self-contained settings. The proposed study will also attempt to illuminate factors that may improve retention of highly qualified staff.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this research based on the inherent ambiguity associated with personal factors related to an individual's decision to remain in her/his current teaching position. One of the founding principles of qualitative research is that the world is not comprised of single objective realities that can be quantified through mathematic manipulation (Merriam, 1998). Rather it is comprised many differing realities that are colored by the perceptions and interactions of the individual (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, this methodology was selected to provide greater insight into what each of the previously discussed factors mean to the given individual. The strength in qualitative research lies in its responsiveness and flexibility to situation-specific factors. With qualitative research there is more freedom to alter the line of questioning based on emerging data. This methodology significantly differs from that of quantitative research. More specifically, quantitative research methods generally employ standardized instruments which minimize the depth in which individuals can choose to respond (Patton, 2002). This study requires both the flexibility to alter the trajectories of interviews and freedom to explore in greater depth the issues that are most salient to the population of interest.

Research Questions

1. It is hypothesized that increased access to paraprofessional and professional staff in both direct and indirect capacities will decrease overall levels of perceived stress and increase retention rates of highly qualified teachers.
2. It is hypothesized that increased administrative support will reduce levels of role ambiguity and increase retention rates of special education teachers.
3. It is hypothesized that salary and level of educational training will impact upon the individual's commitment to his/her current teaching position.

The following sub-questions, which may extend the results of the main research questions, will also be addressed:

4. In what ways, if any, does gender have an impact upon retention rates of special education teachers?
5. In what ways, if any, does age play a role in reducing levels of stress and effect retention rates?
6. In what ways, if any, does years of experience impact upon an individual's intention to remain in his/her current job?

Description of Setting

This study will target public school employees in a large metropolitan school district in the southwest. At the time of this writing, this district provides educational services to 22,676 students. Thirteen percent of the total population is identified as qualifying for special education services. The demographic information provided by the

Human Resources Department of this school district indicated that the population is comprised of 53% White non-Hispanic, 25% Hispanic, 14% African American, and 8% other. This study will focus specifically on a subset of self-contained settings known as The Social Adjustment Classes (S.A.C.), Pre School Programs for Children with Disabilities (P.P.C.D.), and Life Skills.

Programs and Population

Students receiving service in the S.A.C. programs represent approximately 5-10% of the total special education population. According to the district special programs manual, the S.A.C. program is intended for students with severe emotional behavioral issues that cannot be adequately addressed in less restrictive environments. A recommendation for placement in this program is considered only after considering less restrictive options. Prior to placement, the Individual Educational Plan team must have documented the implementation of an array of positive behavioral supports. The documentation must also include information related to a substantial resistance to intervention or behaviors that present imminent peril to other students or staff. The overall mission statement of the S.A.C. program is to provide a highly structured environment with intensive behavioral supports to assist emotionally disturbed or otherwise behaviorally challenged students in making academic and social progress. Ongoing behavioral skills lessons and high levels of reinforcement for the occurrences of appropriate behavior are two crucial underpinnings of the program. Each S.A.C. unit is

staffed with one teacher and one instructional assistant. Classroom support is also provided by school based counselors and district level psychological services personnel.

Students educated in the Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities (P.P.C.D.) must meet eligibility under one of five categories. Those categories include hearing impairments, visual impairments, preschool moderate delay, preschool severe delay, and/or preschool speech/language delay. This program is intended for students who are at least three years of age and have not yet met the age requirements to enter kindergarten. Educational services are provided by special education personnel based on goals prescribed in the student's Individual Education Plan. A broad array of services is offered via this program. The services include but are not limited to educational modification; occupational therapy; speech, visual and communication services; and behavioral support via school based mental health professionals. The ultimate goal of this program is to provide the student with the necessary skills to successfully transition to a regular education or blended special/regular education kindergarten placement.

The Life Skills (L.S.) program is intended for special education students who are significantly impaired in the areas of communication, social, and cognitive functioning. Placement in this program should only be considered after the Individual Education Plan Team has determined the presence of a significant and relatively permanent impairment that impacts multiple areas of the student's educational and life functions. The level of impairment must be considered so severe that the students are unable to be appropriately educated in less restrictive regular or special education placements. There is some

diversity in the types of disability that are often associated with this placement option.

The typical disability categories that are served within this setting include students with Mental Retardation or moderate to severe Autism. The program is geared toward providing remedial instruction in the areas of daily living skills, social skills, and occupational preparation. Functional academics are also an integrated component within the life skills curriculum. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide the students with skills that will prepare them for independent or semi independent living post graduation.

Participants

This study utilized a criterion based sample. Criterion sampling is a technique by which participants are selected based on a predetermined criterion (Patton, 2001).

Criterion samples are most often utilized when the intent of a study is to obtain in-depth information on a select subgroup of a given system. This data tends to be more salient in determining the needs of a specific setting or group (Patton, 2001). The study included teachers employed in self-contained classrooms in the noted district. The participants were eight certified or credentialed special education teachers. All participants had at minimum, a high school diploma and had been fully credentialed by the state. Self-contained special education teachers were selected to obtain data regarding factors that influence attrition and retention in this occupational career. It is also important to note that a large degree of difference in socioeconomic brackets, types of educational training, and varying professional experiences are also typical of the teachers who enter this profession.

Demographic Data

The sample for this study was made up of eight special education self-contained teachers. It included two P.P.C.D teachers, one S.A.C. teacher from each of the high school, middle school, and elementary school levels, and one L.S. teacher from each of the high school, middle school, and elementary school levels. In regard to gender, six of the eight participants were women and two were men. All participants identified themselves as being White Non-Hispanic and had at minimum a bachelors' degree. Four out of the eight participants have either received or are completing Master's level degrees. Three of the eight participants fell between ages 26-33, two between the ages 34-41, two between the ages 42-49 and one participant was over the age of 57. The average years of teaching experience in self-contained classes was 4.8 years. Years of experience in self-contained classes ranged from one to eleven years. The average total years of teaching experience was 10.25 with a range of one to thirty years of teaching experience. Three of the eight participants also indicated on average 1.5 years of substitute teaching experience and two of the eight indicated one year of paraprofessional experience. Finally, four participants indicated an average of eight years of experience working with individuals with disabilities outside of the school setting.

Self of the Researcher

As is common in qualitative work, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and interpretation, thus it is standard for the researcher to explicitly identify experiences and biases that may impact the study (Patton, 2001). I am a doctoral student

currently pursuing a Ph.D. in School Psychology at Texas Woman's University. This is my second in-depth experience with qualitative research. My first formal experience was through my university coursework requirements. I completed a pilot study dealing with several of the factors included in this proposed study. My previous work experience has provided me with a myriad of experiences that may enhance my ability to produce useful information regarding the Social Adjustment Class program. I have been employed by a local school district for the past 9 years as a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology. Through this position, I have been responsible for providing consultative and direct support to teachers and staff working in the S.A.C. units. My position has afforded me the opportunity to write and influence the writing of program guidelines. I have also been responsible for generating numerous protocols and procedures for dealing with extreme behaviors.

I believe that my experiences have provided me with a specialized level of knowledge regarding self-contained programs. It has also provided me with a unique opportunity to witness these programs evolve through the years as federal, state, and local policies change. Because of my insider knowledge of this program I expected to find a heavy reliance on human resources in the daily operation of the program and the management of children. Because of my previous work experience in the program I believe that some personal bias may exist toward the issue of importance placed on human resources. I have suspected for years that the quality of assistance within self-contained units played a pivotal role in retaining qualified personnel. In an attempt to

address this potential bias, I structured my questions to allow for disconfirmation. My semi-structured open-ended interview format was intended to offer the interviewees autonomy in the manner in which they choose to answer the provided questions. Their responses determined the course that the interview took. The interview was also structured to insure that the interviewees were comfortable asking questions and discussing issues that hold relevance to them and their profession. For example, if they felt that the question did not adequately reflect an issue of importance to them, they were free to respond in a way that was more meaningful to them.

Conceptual Framework

When first attempting to bring meaning to the information obtained in the literature review, I found it helpful to utilize an illustration to assist in conceptualizing the direction that the interview questions should initially take. Conceptual frameworks are visual illustrations of the major points to be addressed within the study and the possible interconnections between each area (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process also helps to refine research questions and distill multiple topics down to those that appear most meaningful (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Its strength also lies in establishing specifics of who and what will be investigated throughout the study. Once the conceptual framework was established, the process of generating appropriate questions to tap into these areas begins.

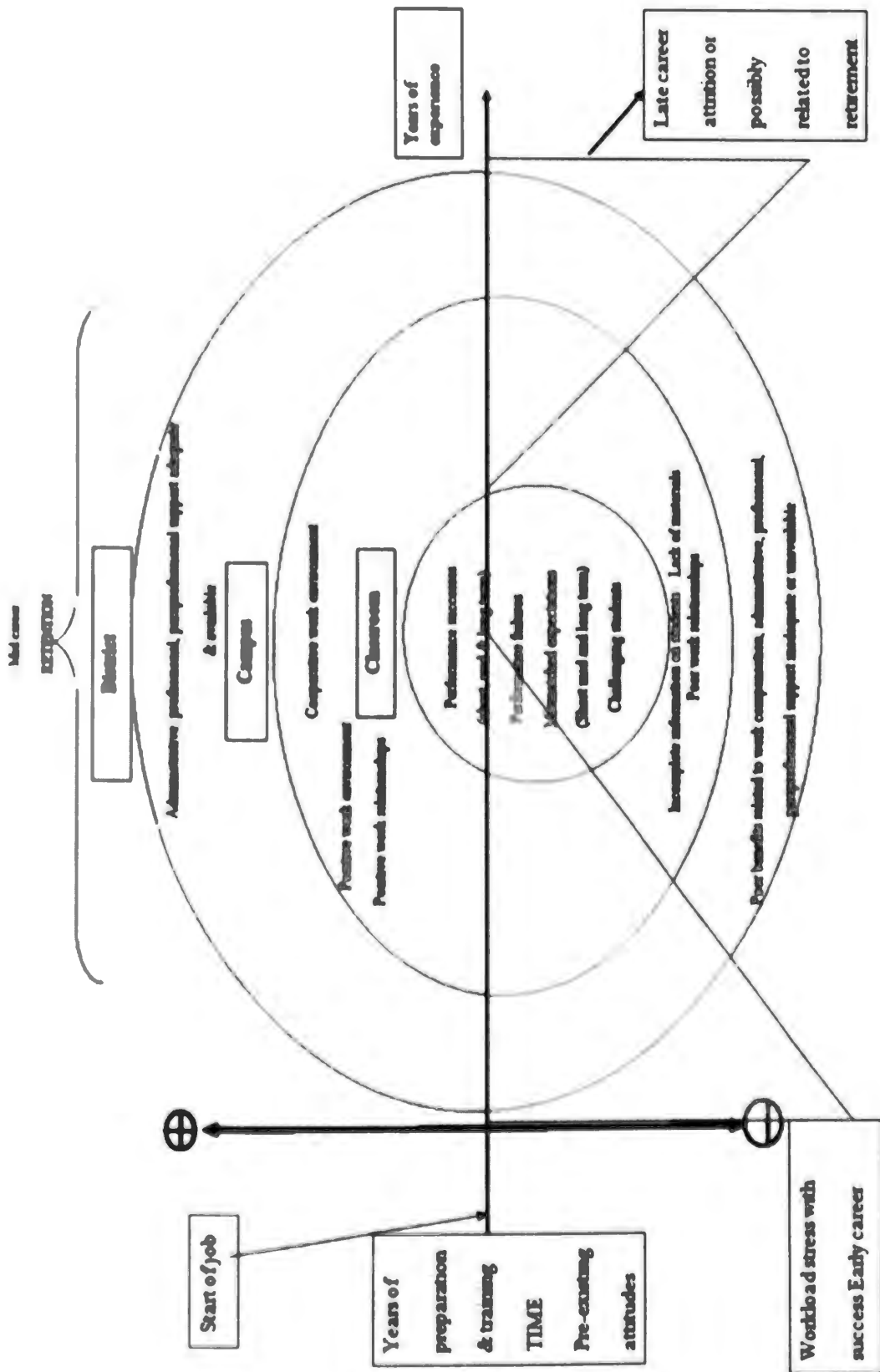


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Instrumentation

Within qualitative research the use of semi-structured interviews is the most frequently utilized method for obtaining information on perceptions of a target population. As a species, we rely heavily on the spoken word to transmit information regarding our wants, needs, and desires from the world in which we live (Kavale, 1996). Through the obtaining of this information, the interviewer begins the process of qualitative interpretation and assigns meaning to the statements within the framework of the study (Patton, 2002). This process is not a static one. It is a dynamic process between the life experiences and perspectives of the interviewee and that of the interviewer (Patton, 2002). The ultimate goal of the interview process is to uncover meaning through the themes that emerge from the dialogue.

The interviews focused specifically on teacher-generated themes that may moderate their decision to stay in or vacate the self-contained teaching position. More specifically, the interviews focused on how access to direct and indirect professional and paraprofessional staff may impact upon the individual's decision to retain their current work position. The influence of race, gender, and salary was also examined to determine what effect they may have on the individual's decision to retain or vacate his/her current work position. The semi-structured interviews were utilized to obtain information on levels of academic support, access to professional and paraprofessional staff, and overall job satisfaction. Basic demographic questions were also included to obtain information on age, gender, ethnicity, years of formal education training, type of certification, and

years employed in their current position. The semi-structured interview that was utilized is available in Appendix A. It is important to note that this format also allowed for the flexibility of follow-up questions. These questions were used to provide clarification to teacher statements. The follow-ups will also generate richer data based on teacher responses.

Supporting program documents. A copy of the self-contained classroom guidelines was also obtained during the data collection process. These manuals provide an in-depth description of the program. It also provides a wealth of information related to eligibility for the service, core academic and behavioral content, and expectations of the students and staff within the program. This guide is useful in providing not only a rich description of how the program was intended to operate, but also serves as a contrast to how the programs are actually operating.

Procedures

Entry protocol. Due to the familiarity with these settings and the teaching staff, only minimal preparation for entry was required. However, in order to assure informed consent, the teaching staff as well as the administration was provided with a copy of the intent of the project. This document contained not only a description of methods being implemented, but also included a listing of how the materials would be utilized and what steps would be taken to insure security of the materials upon completion of the project.

As the project manager, I sought and obtained consent from the assistant superintendent and director of special education to conduct this research and to obtain a

listing of names of self-contained teachers in the selected school district. These individuals were sent an email from within the district inviting them to participate in an interview related to their current teaching position. Explanations of the requirements as well as procedural safeguards were included in the email. The participants were asked to contact the project manager via email or phone if they were interested in participating. A second email was sent one week later to the individuals that had not replied. The email was similar in content to the first email with a statement offering further clarification related to the project. Prior to enrollment, the teachers were provided with a consent form and a detailed verbal overview of the nature of our study and the types of information that would be collected. Upon verbal agreement, consent and time commitment were reviewed. The estimated time commitment related to reviewing the consent was approximately 10 minutes. The completion of the consent form ranged from 10-20 minutes. Copies of the relevant informed consent materials are provided in Appendix B.

All individuals participating in the study were provided with the opportunity to ask questions at any point during the research process. Copies of the consent forms were provided to the participants. Researcher contact information was also disseminated to provide opportunities for questions that may arise after the completion of the session. An executive summary of the results of the data collected was made available to all participants upon request.

Thirty-to fifty-minute audio-taped interviews were used in this qualitative research project. These interviews were scheduled at least three days prior to their being carried out. The audio-taped interviews were conducted at each of the teacher's home campuses or a mutually agreed upon location. As previously mentioned, questions included a review of teacher experience prior to current employment, how each individual viewed success, things viewed as supports for the instructor, and overall satisfaction with current employment. Additional interviews were scheduled based on trends that emerged from the data. Samples of these questions are included in the appendices of this report. It is important to note that some modifications to the original questions were required to reflect themes that were emerging from the interview data.

Documentation. My documentation system during this process included a series of notations and reactions at each stage of this qualitative research project. I utilized a portable electronic calendar to keep track of my interview and observation appointments. I also relied heavily on email to schedule and re-schedule observations and interviews. My field notes were kept on loose leafed paper housed in a three ring binder and via electronic format when a lap top was utilized. When not in use the binder was locked in a file cabinet and all electronic files were encrypted/password protected. The notes reflected impressions of interviewee responses as well as possible new directions that I might want to consider in follow up interviews. Reviewing field notes and typing brief summaries into a word document file served as my contact summaries.

This researcher relied heavily on audiotapes to document the interviews.

However, notes were also made throughout each of the interviews. These notes served as contact summaries. After the interviews were completed, a review of these notes was completed. Brief impression statements were documented based on the note content. These summary sheets were kept in a binder. Each interview was transcribed, and the participant information was de-identified and contained only coded initials of participants. Audiotapes and transcript documentation was kept in large clasping folder and stored in a locked cabinet at my home.

Analysis. Qualitative researchers acknowledge that analysis decisions are pre-figured even in the initial design phases of a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The task of analyzing the data within this study began by creating a series of working definitions to describe the aspects of teacher perceptions on which this researcher wished to focus. In the conceptual phase of this study a set of rough questions was generated and then refined based on the review of literature and statement of purpose for this project. The initial thrust of the questions related to the impact of demographic issues, prior teacher experiences, levels of supports, access to professional and paraprofessional staff and views on success. These questions were intended to generate thematic content on the impact upon self-contained teacher's decisions to remain in a given position. Sub-factors were added as thematic content begins to emerge from the interview data. The questions and sub-factors were considered through the framework of the conceptual map that was

previously described. Through this process proposed links between factors were analyzed.

Coding. Upon completion of the independent interviews, a coding system was developed to aide in the interpretation of the data. The coding process was facilitated by computer based software. It was expected that this process would initially yielded a significant number of broad codes, but become more specific as the process continued (Miles & Huberman, 1994). One of the challenges to the researcher was attempting to determine which themes in the data categorically go together and which do not (Patton, 2004). By analyzing the convergence and divergence of the data, the researcher was better able to find the best fit in each of the generated categorical codes (Patton, 2004). Therefore, through this process, broad codes gave way to a series of sub-codes, which tapped into the thematic content emerging from the transcripts. The sub-coding process was intended to reflect the information provided by the interviewees (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is also important to note that some additional codes were added in the latter transcripts to address emotional reactions by the interviewees. These new codes were utilized to recode portions of the data in the initial transcripts.

It is important to note that all of the interview transcripts were read through multiple times and notations related to my general reactions to the content were made. After each reading additional notes related to the content of the transcripts were made. Through this process I began to conceptualize the data in terms of supports or insulators to stress and events that that were perceived as stressors. A third review of the transcripts

was utilized to refine and more precisely define individual features of the broad dichotomous variables. My previously developed conceptual map was utilized to assist in adding resolution to sub-factors associated to stressors and insulators (See Figure 1). As themes in the data began to emerge, associated codes were created. A hierarchical system based on the conceptual model was utilized to create a clear and comprehensive coding system (See Appendix D). Portions of the transcripts were initially coded by hand. Once the coding system had been consolidated, the transcripts and codes were imported to the Invivo 8^C coding software. Individual coding summaries were generated for each transcript as an interim step in the analysis process. The raw data was then reviewed for frequency of code occurrences across participants.

The coding references were categorized into four sub-ranges: 1-5 references Low occurrence, 6-10 references Medium, 11-24 references High and 25 references or greater Very High. The ranges were based on a scatter plot of the code frequencies. Through a visual analysis of the data the preceding coding ranges emerged.

The following table provides a breakdown of the coding ranges, number of codes per category and the number of references that are associated to each range.

Table 1.

Coding References and Ranges

Categories	Number of codes	Number of References
Very High	7	25+
High	14	11-24
Medium	12	6-10
Low	19	1-5

There were a total of 52 codes that were utilized throughout the course of the transcribed data. The Very High range descriptor was noted to occur within the fewest number of coding categories. Only 7 of the 52 coding categories received the Very High designation. This suggests greater levels of significance associated with these coding areas. It is important to note that the Low designation was associated with 20 out of the 52 code references. This indicates lower levels of significance associated with those given areas. The High range was used to indicate references occurring throughout 11 coding categories. The designation of Medium was given to those codes that appeared throughout 13 coding categories. The intent of categorization is to facilitate a clearer understanding of the robustness of thematic occurrences within the varying coding categories.

The analysis portion of this study was also refined via the use of cross coding twenty five percent of the transcribed data. Cross coding is a method of triangulation in which a second researcher independently reviews the interview transcripts and re-codes the data. The intention of this process is to assure corroboration between examiners of the application of the thematic codes to transcript data. Another benefit of this process relates to ensuring that the data obtained is trustworthy (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Based on feedback from the cross coder, modifications to the coded were made. From the emergent data, a matrix that summarizes the frequency of themes across participants was utilized. Finally, points of intersection or discrepancy were reported via percentages of cross coder agreement.

Establishing credibility and trustworthiness. The terms credibility and trustworthiness relate specifically to the quality or soundness in which data is collected, analyzed and interpreted (Patton, 2002). In attempting to ensure the credibility of this study, multiple forms of triangulation were implemented in accordance with principles set forth by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Patton (2002). Triangulation can be defined as tool for establishing the consistency of data collected within qualitative research studies. Techniques can include but are not limited utilization of multiple sources of data or multiple personnel to check for converge and divergence between data.

The forms of triangulation that were utilized included multiple teacher interviews, cross coding by a second researcher and member checks. Cross coding is a process by which a second researcher reviews and codes the transcribed materials. The cross coding is then compared to the initial coding to check for consistency within the findings. A member check is a process by which the participants have an opportunity to provide feedback on their interviews. The researcher sent each participant a summary of his or her transcript to ensure that it accurately reflected the information that he or she provided. This feedback was assessed, changes were made as necessary and those changes served to finalize the transcript information and coding. The preceding literature review was utilized to assure that the constructs that were being utilized had a theoretical basis. Due to the specific nature of the setting and population of this study, the results presented should not be generalized beyond the scope of the settings described.

Validity Check

Member checks were sent out to all eight participants. Four of the eight participants responded to the request for feedback. Multiple attempts were made to obtain feedback from the remaining participants. However, no response was obtained. The participants that did respond indicated that the summaries accurately reflected their responses during the interview. Cross coding was also utilized as a means of assuring both validity and reliability of the coding process. The cross coding process involved providing a research assistant with four participant transcripts and a copy of the code book. The results demonstrated a 91% concurrence in the data. The discrepancies appeared to reflect upon contextual differences in the content read. Several times the emotional context of the transcribed data was unclear to the cross coder. However, the divergence in code selection does not appear to reflect a significant discrepancy across coders.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The interview questions focused primarily on identifying the presence or absence of district, campus, and classroom level supports that may insulate staff from stress or create stressors that impact the desirability of their occupational choice. A review of the data revealed 296 total stress references and 355 references to insulators to stress across participants. A review of the individual domains and totals can be found in Table 2.

Table 2.

Total Number of Insulator and Stressors across Levels

	District	Campus	Classroom/Individual
Insulators	48	77	230
Stressors	113	99	84

District Level Stressors and Insulators

District Stress Codes

The coding in this area revealed 113 total references to district level stressors across participants. Table 2. provides a breakdown of references contained within the district code.

Table 3.

District Level Stress Codes

Codes	District Stressors	Level of Occurrences
Lack of Educational Supports /Relevant Training	29	Very High
Paperwork and Legal Requirement Stress	27	Very High
Lack of Educational Supports-Curriculum	12	High
Lack of Social Supports or Isolation from District Staff	14	High
Lack of Educational Supports-MS	8	Medium
Lack of Educational Supports Student to Staff Relation	7	Low
District Support Negative	2	Low
Salary Negative	2	Low
Total References	113	

As Table 3. illustrates, there were multiple recurrences of themes related to sources of stress associated with district level personnel and overall processes and procedures. The stressors that fell within the Very High level of occurrences included lack of educational supports/relevant training and paperwork and legal requirements.

Lack of educational supports-relevant training emerged twenty nine times in the interview data. This code was utilized when participants indicated frustration regarding the type, quantity or quality of available training opportunities. Examples of participant statements included

"It's interesting...music therapy is interesting I mean and my wife is a music therapist. I don't need in-service on it every single year. You know APE is the same thing. It's interesting but I don't, you know, I'm not majoring in it, I don't need to know the ends and out of it. It's something, it's a program that is going to effectively impact my class..."

A second participant described her unhappiness with the quality of in-service trainings in the following way:

"I'm so glad you asked. I think that the professional development situation is not working for teachers in self contained classes. I just think that it is not working at all. At least not in the district that I am in, the setting that I am in the time that I am in right now. I have not ever once met with another teacher of a classroom like mine. Ever. I have never gone to meeting, there has never been a development for us.

An additional example of stress associated with ineffective training included:

"...The ones that I have been too, the majority I have been able to comp out of and I've hosted some. They seem like stuff that staff should have already gotten, at least the ones that I have attended. You should have already gotten in college..."

The examples illustrate a disconnect between the overall training expectations of employees and the training topics provided by that of the district in-service coordinators.

The second code that corresponded to the Very High level of occurrences was paperwork and legal requirement. Twenty seven occurrences emerged from the data set. This code was utilized when participants reported that paperwork was overwhelming, a hassle, creates fear of legal reprisal for failing to meet standards, frustration related to the fact that paperwork takes time away from the students. This code also included participation in extended ARD meetings that related to paperwork/IEP issues. One participant stated, "It (Stress) would be high because of the IEPs and the legal. Making sure that everything is by the law and then dealing with all the different disabilities and the laws that govern that." Another example was

“It’s a necessary thing. I hate it but you know you have to document everything that you do. You know it seems like there is a whole entire uh industry within the legal profession dedicated to suing special ed teachers and schools based on special education needs. So you have got to document everything you know.”

A final example included:

“Also with this past year you know they did, they said that special education teachers had to have another certification outside of special ed. So that was a stress for me. Because I don’t know what is happening with that. I don’t know if they are getting ready to can me because I didn’t have it done before the year started. You know so that was, was stressful. Even now, you know I don’t know if I did the right thing.”

Stressor codes at the district level that corresponded to the High level included 12 code references of lack of educational supports-curriculum and 14 references to lack of social supports or isolation for district staff. Lack of educational supports-curriculum was coded if the participants indicated report that a lack of a standardized or cohesive curriculum interferes with provision of services. Participant statements that related to this code included

“There is no curriculum for life skills. So it’s kind of make your own. Which can be frustrating as a new teacher.” and “I want, I wish that ***** had a curriculum for special life skills classes. Because building a curriculum is my weak point as far as...As far as my teaching goes, I don’t know what to use. I don’t have a lot of resources in my class. We are kind of a mish mash of whatever people have given us.”

The participants frequently revealed frustration regarding a lack of the overall cohesiveness of programming within their district. As highlighted in the quotes, the participants often felt as if they were singularly responsible for development of a curriculum to match the needs of their students.

Lack of social supports or isolation for district staff reflected upon a general disconnection or lack of involvement of district level staff or supervisors. References to this code included

“Um, I feel like when I ask for something, it has to go through a hundred people and I never get an answer. I don’t know who to ask for certain things. I don’t know where to go? There is not like a list of: These are people that work in special ed. You ask this person about this stuff.”

Another participant expressed frustration by stating “...they ask for help they either don’t get it or can’t get it for whatever reason.” The lack of effective communication between district level personnel and instructional staff was prominent throughout the coded references in this section. The participants frequently reported feelings of isolation and uncertainty regarding certain district level processes and procedures.

The code associated with lack of educational supports-materials and supplies emerged eight times throughout the course of the transcripts. This medium number of occurrences within the subset of district level stress codes. Lack of educational supports-materials and supplies was coded when participants reports that they did not have the materials and supplies necessary to successfully complete their job. This could include items such as textbooks, handouts, manipulatives or software. One example of this included

“I do wish that we had...things are nice, things are good and things are often motivating for the kids. They enjoy them. So the shopping and the store and the little treats and stickers and those little kids of things that would be nice to have a supply of that didn’t come out of our pockets: My pocket but anyway. Other than that it is human.”

Overall, participants indicated that consumables or things that would be utilized as reinforcers were often not reimbursable through the district. Therefore, they were forced to purchase these things at their own expense.

An additional code that fell in the medium range of occurrences was lack of educational supports-student to staff ratio. The student to staff ratio code related specifically to stress associated with too many students in the classroom or too many adults in a limited space. One example included "The number of kids, not enough support to help with what they have. Um expecting too much in a day." This quote illustrates how providing adequate services to students who require high levels of service can create stress on the instructional staff.

Codes that corresponded to the Low range of occurrences district support-negative and salary negative. The district support-negative code was a broad code that was intended to capture statements related to overall negative impressions of the district they worked within. The salary negative code focused primarily on the individual's dissatisfaction with current salary or a desire for more money for the position in which they work. As the qualitative indicator of "Low" occurrences implies, these codes did not often emerge through the course of the analysis.

District Insulators

Participants also indicated multiple examples of district level supports that can be conceptualized as insulators to overall stressors. District level insulators fell into several broad categories including access to educational supports, financial compensation for

entry into the position, opportunities for educational development and opportunity for career advancement. The results of the coding are presented in the chart below.

Table 4.

District Level Insulators

Codes	District Insulators	Level of Occurrences
Access to Educational Support-Training	15	High
Salary Neutral	9	Medium
Access to Educational Support-Supervisor	6	Medium
Access to Educational Support Individual	5	Low
Salary Positive	4	Low
Access to Educational Support-Technology	3	Low
Occupational Aspiration Upward Mobility Negative	3	Low
Occupational Aspiration- Upward Mobility Positive	2	Low
Salary Entry	1	Low
Total References	48	

A High number of references were noted on the code related to access to educational support-training. Fifteen total references emerged from the transcribed data. Access to educational support-training was endorsed when the interviewee described accessing or interacting with other professionals for purpose of receiving relevant

training or useful professional development activities. Participants indicated this as an area of support by making statements such as

"I feel like there are lots of opportunities. Region AA is a good spot. I went to an in-service yesterday that was on communication. It was alright. But I feel there are a lot of opportunities out there and I feel that our district is really good about paying for the ones that need to be paid for. They really want you to succeed and they really want you to have the training."

Other participants described the benefits of training opportunities in terms of access to regional service centers. "Region AA is such a great resource and they have um streaming videos and there's more resources. And again, a lot of them are online so we print or we look on the overhead." A strong bias toward training was noted for training that was easy to access and apply to their setting was noted throughout the references.

Nine references to salary neutral and six to access to educational support-supervisor occurred throughout the analysis process. This corresponded to the Medium occurrence level. Salary-neutral was used to describe the participants overall satisfaction with salary, but also revealed that salary had no impact on their decision to remain in their current position. The following quote illustrates overall conceptualization of this area of coding.

"I really hope that salary for teachers is at least sixth on the hierarchical list of why you are in your job. I think that in this district and in this state our salaries are pretty fine. They are pretty good. There are a lot of people that are making a lot less money than a special ed teacher in a self-contained classroom. A lot of people making a lot less money. But I also think that if our salary was half of what it was people would probably not show up for the job at all."

Access to educational support-supervisor was coded when a participant indicated positive reactions to contact with district level supervisors or personnel to assist in

resolving issues. Within the context of this code, the participant may also describe district level staff as approachable in addressing concerns. One participant stated

“I know that I could approach Dr. X or Mr. Y or if there was an issue if I happened to see them and I was uh you know, at central. Or if I saw my principal. I would feel very comfortable saying something. I, I don’t think I would have to guard myself. Of course I could always send an email or a note.”

The perceived accessibility to and responsiveness of district level personnel to the needs of the individual define this area of coding.

The district level insulators that corresponded to the Low range of occurrences included access to educational support-Individual, salary positive, access to educational support-technology, occupational aspirations-upward mobility negative, occupational aspiration upward mobility positive, and salary entry. These codes occurred with a frequency of 5 or fewer times throughout the course of the analysis. Access to educational support-individual was defined as readily available access or support from, teachers, mentors or relationships with previous university teachers or advisors. This code was endorsed as occurring at the district level when the individual participants indicate mentoring or partner teacher programs established by the district. The salary positive code was defined by occurrences of salary being mentioned as an inducement to remain in their current positions. The code related to access to educational support-technology was utilized when district technology resources were indicated as an aide to the performance of the individual’s duties. The occupational aspirations-upward mobility negative code was utilized when the participants discussed contentment with their current job and having no plans to move out of the classroom based setting. The occupational

aspiration upward mobility-positive code was used when the participant revealed positive feelings regarding their current position based on the availability of upward mobility. Finally, salary entry was used when participants indicated that salary was an inducement to enter the position but was not the primary reason they remain in the position.

Campus Level Stressors and Insulators

Campus Stress Codes

Upon examination of the broad subclass of campus stressors, the following categories emerged as stressors: Lack of adequate administrator support, difficulties effectively interacting with or utilizing paraprofessional support, poor communication and collaboration with general education staff, feelings of isolation from the general population of professionals on the campus.

Table 5.

Campus Level Stress Codes

Codes	Campus Stressors	Occurrence Level
Administrative Support Negative	48	Very High
Lack of Educational Supports-Collaboration	17	High
Paraprofessionals as a source of stress	14	High
Lack of Educational Support Relevant-Training	11	High
Lack of Social Support-Campus	8	Medium
Lack of Educational Supports-Material and Supplies	1	Low
Total References	99	

A closer examination of these broad categories revealed a Very High number of statements regarding lack of administrative support as a primary stressor. This code was utilized 48 times, and was associated with content that referred to a negative or unproductive communication between themselves and an administrator. It might include statements related to receiving inconsistent or no information or advice from supervisors or administrators on legal, ethical or practical matters. More broadly it reflects upon statements related to poor communication, feeling mistrusted and demoralized. It can also reflect upon a dislike of the administrator's leadership style. An example would be administrators that are over-involved in the day to day running of the classroom, lack of constructive feedback and fails to work to include special needs students in the general education setting. Inadequate or ineffective discipline contingencies were also associated with this code. This code is highlighted in the following excerpt: "I think the reason why people do leave or transfer to another campus is has a lot to do with administration. It's If you don't feel like you have support, umm then you're not going to enjoy your job, you're not...I mean it just impacts everything." Participants also indicated frustration with administrative support in the following way.

"My administration...um the vice principal that is over my department is...I'm trying to think of a great word. X has a like a little person syndrome. And X will bully you just because. X has a very strong personality. Even though X hired me, X does not like that. X has told me straight to my face that "I do not like you." Well you know that does not help with our relationship. Therefore it is harder to get to tell X, I really need this and this is why."

This participant revealed significant levels of stress associated with the overall quality of her relationship with the administrator. Lack of trust in the individual professional ability by the administrator was glaring within the subtext of this quotation. A final supporting quote referred to the type of additional support that would be beneficial to the teacher from the administrator. The participant indicated that:

“...if the administration acted as kind of the head and took some of the brunt of some of the parents anger... (Regarding services) if the administrators could step in front of that and be the ones to explain that to the parents instead of us always having to do it. Um I think that would be, I think that would help out.”

Campus level stress codes that corresponded to the High level of occurrences included lack of educational support-collaboration, paraprofessionals as a source of stress and lack of supports relevant training. Lack of educational supports-collaboration emerged seventeen times throughout the interviews. References were placed in this coding category when participants detailed stress regarding integration of special education students in the general education settings. Broadly it included statements related to difficulty collaborating effectively with regular education teachers. More specifically, the lack of cohesions within this inclusion process was discussed. This code was also utilized when participants reported that regular education and special education teachers working in parallel rather than collaboratively. Finally, this code also included failure on the part of the general educators to openly share educational materials such as books, handouts, Power points, notes, lesson plans etc. This coding content included statements such as “Um, when it comes to, you know, people outside of the classroom, other teachers other administrators or whatever, they are not as important. Unless they

decide to take an active role with the kids. Even (if) they could be in someone's class and the teacher may or may not want to be involved with that child but when they don't it creates a negative situation for everyone involved because a kid can pick up on that."

This quote illustrates the frustration special education teachers experience in obtaining acceptance for their students in the general education setting. The participants also highlighted the issue of disconnection between general and special education setting by stating "I do think that it is a challenging job. I do think that there are several things that make this job trying that maybe general educators can't relate to... and general ed. cooperation. I think that is a big source of headaches for self-contained teachers."

Paraprofessionals as a source of stress, was also noted to correspond to the High level of occurrences. This code related to a lack of shared vision between the teacher and the paraprofessional regarding classroom model and provision of service to students. Personality conflicts and managerial issues between teachers and paraprofessionals were also included in this code. Examples of this code within the transcribed data included "I am trying to strike a balance between being their boss and also trying to have a good relationship with them." and "You can't come in chatting like you are on your back porch." As these examples illustrate, managing paraprofessionals and striking a balance between being a boss and a friend can be challenging for some staff.

Lack of educational support-relevant training corresponded to the High level range. It appeared within the coding data eleven times. Lack of educational support-relevant training was utilized when participants indicated that the staff development

provided by the campus was deemed as inadequate or inappropriate to meet their professional development needs. Lack of educational support-materials and supplies at the campus level was defined by limitations on the provision of materials that could be paid for through the campus based budget. The quotes that were most frequently referred to in this category included "Sometimes you are required to go to some that are not as helpful as they could be...Repetitious..." This category was also associated to statements such as "Not just a little but some basic special education training." Statements like this were highly indicative of limited applicable onsite training that is applicable to their day to day job requirements.

Lack of social support-campus corresponded to the Medium occurrence level and emerged eight times through the course of the data analysis. This code was defined as a general disconnection from other teachers or staff that are on the campus. Participants may express feelings that other teachers don't take ownership or acknowledge that they are responsible for teaching special needs students or don't feel connected to overall culture of the campus. "I think that is the last thing that I want to emphasize is just that there really isn't anyone else on campus that understands. Day to day how difficult it could be sometimes in my classroom... So I think that teachers in my position want to be empathized with..." The lack of perceived understanding on the part of the general education teachers was frequently reported as a barrier to the overall integration of special needs students.

Lack of educational support materials and supplies corresponded to the low level of occurrences. It appeared within the coding only once. Lack of educational support-materials and supplies at the campus level was defined by limitations on the provision of materials that could be paid for through the campus based budget.

Campus Insulators

Campus level insulators to the stress reflect a broad class of codes corresponding to perceived supports in the building that they currently work. Insulators at this level could include open and collaborative communication with administrators and general education staff, access to paraprofessional support, mentor relationships and training opportunities.

Table 6.

Campus Level Insulators

Codes	Campus Insulators	Level of Occurrences
Access to Educational Support Campus	34	Very High
Para Professional Support as an Insulator	30	Very High
Access to Educational Support-Individual	10	Medium
Access to Educational Support-Training	2	Low
Access to Educational Support Materials and Supplies	1	Low
Total References	77	

A review of the data revealed a Very High number of references to the access to educational support-campus and paraprofessional support as an insulator codes. A total of 34 references were made to access to educational supports at the campus level. This code referred to participant's reliance on campus administrators and support staff personnel to assist with challenging behaviors or provide academic or behavior support. Participants made frequent references to the importance of being able to rely on administration and support staff to periodically assist them in meeting their student's needs. When discussing the role of support staff personnel, one participant explained "...they help with ARDS legal information, when I'm not sure how to handle a situation. They are there to support me in that." This participant went on to say that "They supported me with several parent issues...I mean I was trying to think of a specific one, but I can't think of one right now" Accessibility and trust in the support staffs abilities to assist were consistent themes when this dialogue. A final example of campus based support was noted in the following comment. "There were two incidences of craziness that were addressed with the assistant principal because of their nature. There was some violence involved. But it wasn't even on campus." Again this quote reflects heavily on the participants need to rely on the expertise of support personnel when crisis situations emerge.

Paraprofessionals support as an insulator emerged 31 times which corresponded to the Very High Range. This code was utilized when the interviewee described positive attributes or interactions with paraprofessional staff. It included content that indicated

paraprofessionals as a significant resource in dealing effectively with challenging student behaviors or assisting with providing instruction to students. Quotes that highlight this code included:

"I do most of the teaching. However, if there is a particular emotional or behavioral need that is being addressed in an academic area and sometimes that is traded off. For example one child might work better with an aide one on one than with me for a particular amount of time on a particular day for a particular subject. But it depends on what the circumstances are. But I feel comfortable that most of the subjects for the little guys...I feel comfortable giving over the teaching jobs once I have gone over the material."

As this quote illustrates, a positive working relationship between the paraprofessional and the teacher is essential in continuity of educational services to students. This participant made it clear that the teacher must be able to trust in the ability of the paraprofessional to provide appropriate service to students. The quote also suggests that teachers have to have enough insight in the academic process, to recognize which team members work best with which students. This concept is further illustrated by the following:

"A line that I learned a long time ago: Relationships over time just seem, experiencing things with people in enough different situations over enough periods of time that I can feel that I can completely trust them."

Finally, the idea of utilizing the assets of paraprofessionals staff was noted in the following quote

"Um, they are very important in my classroom. Obviously, they are not, I use them more as we are all teaching lessons and we all have our own expertise. So, generally one person does the math instruction, one person does reading, one person does the writing. Of course, I plan it but I use them as far as working at that certain section. I also use them as far as like..."

As this quote illustrates, the teacher's ability to identify the strengths of their staff and delegate responsibilities is an essential component in providing appropriate services to the students in this type of instructional setting.

The code of access to educational support-individual at the campus level corresponded to the Medium range of occurrences. Ten references were reported through the transcribed materials. This code refers to readily available access or support from, teachers, mentors or relationships with previous university teachers or advisors. This thrust of this code is highlighted by the following. "For the paperwork which is the most difficult task for the teachers in the field. I go to my other special ed teachers in the building." This code relates to overcoming a potential obstacle through the access of campus based personnel or supports.

Two codes corresponded to the Low range of occurrences within at the campus tier. Those codes were related to access to educational support-training and materials and supplies. These codes were defined by the participant's indication that campus training or readily accessible supplies were essential or desirable in assisting them with their current job duties. It is important to note that the frequency of occurrences may have been impacted by the participants conceptualization of which department provided funding for the given activities. Participants frequently associated these activities to district moneys rather than campus dollars.

Classroom/Individual Level Stressors and Supports

The broad categories of classroom level stressors included working with difficult parents/parents that feel that adequate service is not being provided, managing and

collaborating with paraprofessionals, lack of academic or behavioral progress of students, paperwork and documentation, scheduling and organizing inclusion support, over and under involved campus-based administration.

Table 7.

Individual Stress Codes

Codes	Individual Stressors	Level of Occurrences
Parent Support Negative	18	High
Qualities or Characteristics of ineffective teachers	17	High
Performance Failures	14	High
Ineffective Stress Reduction Techniques	16	High
Potential for Physical Injury	5	Low
Lack of Educational Records	5	Low
Culture and Age as a Stressor	4	Low
Occupational Aspiration Exit	3	Low
Lack of Social Supports-Individual	2	Low
Total References	84	

Classroom/Individual Level Stress Codes

Stress codes at the individual level were intended to focus on qualities and characteristics inherent to the individual that may associated with or be contributing to a negative outlook or stress. However, this subcategory also reflects upon the

internalization of negative experiences. Themes included in this area could include feelings of inadequacy, performance failures, stress related to potential physical injury, negative interactions with parents and general lack of perceived support.

Four codes within the individual stress level corresponded to the High level of occurrences category. They included parent support negative, qualities or characteristics of ineffective teachers and performance failures. Parent support negative was coded 17 times across participants. This code was used when lack of involvement, over-involvement or otherwise unproductive interactions with parents of students was reported. Frequently through the data participants made statements such as “I wish there was some other way to deal with non-supportive parents or caregivers. It seems like the choices are do what I do and call, write, sometimes home visits.” Statements like this tended to evoke feelings of hopelessness in the participants. The counterpoint to lack of responsiveness was illustrated by significant over involvement by some parents. One participant highlighted this issue with the following quote. “I think I just had a lot of very difficult parents... We had two 3 hours staffing. We spent almost 20 hours on this child in outside meetings. That was my hardest parent.” These statements appear to reflect upon the two extremes of parent involvement that are deemed to be negative aspects of their jobs.

Qualities or characteristics of ineffective teachers were defined by behaviors that lead to higher levels of perceived stress. Examples of this code include inability to

disconnect or compartmentalize from the job, won't ask for help, worrying about variables that are out of their control. Within one of the transcripts a teacher stated,

"... I'm very, just my personality it is very hard for me to ask for help. Not because I don't think I need it, just because I feel like I am going to bother somebody. So toward the end I wasn't really asking too much."

The idea of failing to ask for or accept assistance from other professionals can lead to significant difficulties providing appropriate services to students as well as negatively impacting upon the teacher's feelings of connection to the campus and general well being.

Performance Failures was also noted to occur at the High range of references. This code depicted the deleterious impacts of teaching staff failing assist students in making adequate social and academic progress. Examples of this code were found in statements such as "The most challenging parts are finding what works. What the turning points are that will change attitudes and behaviors and it's always a challenge to do that." and "Well it is stressful when I haven't been able to find something that works for a particular child and I know it's stressful for them. It's stressful for everyone." These quotes reflect the frustration that staff experience when the instructional techniques that they utilize fail to result in social progress or academic gains.

Ineffective stress reduction techniques was coded 16 times and corresponded to the High range of occurrences. This code was endorsed when participants fail to identify useful stress management techniques or had a limited understanding of the impacts of stress on their performance. One example included "Well clearly you know extended

periods of high stress my performance is impacted. I probably am not as patient as I like to be. Usually for the most part I don't...hope or think that my normal level of stress impact my job performance. I usually save that for when the busses come." Although this individual made reference to thinking that it might not be impacting her job, she concluded by implying that she could only hold it together until the busses came at the end of the day.

Low occurrences were noted for the codes related to potential for physical injury, lack of educational records, culture and age as a stressor, occupational aspiration-exit and lack of social supports-individual. Potential for physical injury was defined as reports of having to deal with students who engage in assaultive and aggressive behaviors. Lack of educational records endorsed when participants verbalized that a lack of educational records or history interfered with their ability to adequately educate the student. The code related to culture and age as a stressor referred to any statements that revealed staff age or cultural background as an impediment to relating to and establishing a connection with the student. Occupational aspiration-exit was coded when the participants indicated that they had a desire to leave the field of education. Lastly, the lack of social support-individual code was utilized when staff reported a general disconnection or lack of support from family and friends outside of the school system. None of the codes included in this section occurred with a frequency that would reflect significance.

Classroom/Individual Level Insulators

Multiple references to insulators to stress were noted to occur at the individual level. In fact, this area generated the most content related to supportive factors. A total of 230 references across 8 participants emerged.

Table 8.

Individual Level Insulators

Individual Insulators Codes	Frequency Count	Level of Occurrences
Positive Qualities or Characteristics of Teachers	80	Very High
Experience-Job	37	Very High
Access to Social Supports	21	High
Implementation of Stress Reduction Techniques	18	High
Performance Successes	14	High
Experience-University Training	12	High
Access to Educational Supports-Individual	9	Medium
Occupational Aspirations-Upward Mobility Positive	8	Medium
Increased Time with Student	7	Medium
Experience-Personal	7	Medium
Parent Support Positive	6	Medium
Culture and Age as an Insulator	6	Medium
Occupational Aspiration-Upward Mobility Negative	3	Low
Occupational Aspiration-Lateral/Neutral	2	Low
Total References	230	

The individual level insulator codes were broadly intended to capture internalized traits, attributes, perceived skills, experiences and trainings that impact positively upon

the individual's performance of their job duties. Among the codes that occurred at the Very High level were positive qualities or characteristics of teachers, experience-job and access to social supports. Eighty total references were noted on the code related to positive qualities or characteristics of teachers. Statements were coded using this category when they included qualities that define resilient and successful teachers. In general it was used when the participants expressed a positive outlook on how to successfully intervene with students or an inherent trait or characteristic that assisted them in performing their duties (Ex. Patient teachers and teachers that maintain a sense of rational detachment, ability to organize and schedule, exposure to the setting prior to taking the job, or enjoying a challenge). This code is exemplified by statements such as

"I enjoy most working with the kids the most. Um interacting with them, watching them grow and just expand. Their possibilities... That is what I truly enjoy. That's... I really enjoy working with the kids outside of here too but that is part, pretty much it. There is no... I don't enjoy the, the stress put on by parents are your know government or administration... I don't enjoy that stuff but it is really the kids that keep me."

Participants made frequent references to the importance of a sound connection with their students. It was all too often described as the best part about their jobs, and their sole reason for coming into work each day. Other participants described their profession in terms of a "chance to change people's lives in a better way. The opportunity to make a difference." Another example of resiliency was related to the following

"We adapt and overcome. Succeed, even with the discipline we succeed, but it's just makes it more difficult because we have to get more creative in motivating the kids to, or making the kids want to work with rewards and what not. Sometimes what a kid wants one day can, you know he doesn't want the next."

The experience-job code was utilized 37 times throughout the course of the transcriptions. This code refers to the impact of previous job experiences that impacted upon their decision to enter into or remain in their current position. This code was endorsed when participants indicated that prior experiences provided perspective to assist them in understanding the role of a self-contained teacher. One statement that illustrates the nature and scope of this code included,

“But if you take the time out and really go and experience and kind of figure whether or not this is what you want to be doing you know...I think spending at least a couple of weeks at least before you even start is a good thing. Find the worst classroom in the district and put these people in for a couple of weeks and say this is what could really happen to you. Are you ready to deal with it for at least 3 or 4 years. So many people I feel that they don't know what they are getting in to.”

As this quote illustrates, a high value is placed on practical experiences in settings similar to the one the participant was currently employed. A second exemplar related to the importance of practical experience was,

“I had taught for private schools and private homes for many years before I had university experience... But when it comes to actually teaching the subject matter, nothing beats the practical experience of just doing it and seeing it being done...”

Again, the concept of practical experiences relevant to the current job was deemed as essential in building competency within the position. Multiple participants also noted that they “did some substitute teaching in the social adjustment class and just sort of fit.” This is a key example of how prior exposure can assist the individual make a determination of best fit for the given position.

Access to social supports code emerged 21 times throughout the transcribed material. This code tapped into the positive interactions between the participant and

other outside of the school setting. These interactions were generally viewed positively and resulted in feelings of support or gaining of clarity regarding a situation or concern. For example "My social network is the only important thing in my life. I can live without a job, I can live without money and live in a crappy apartment, but I need my friends. I need my husband, my social..."

The implications of this quote are twofold. The participant is emphasizing the stress related to her current position and the necessity of social supports in coping successfully with the pressures. This concept is further illustrated by "Just having people to lean on to bounce ideas off of, people to gripe at. That really has helped." The importance of being connected to social resources comes through clearly through the previous statement. The individual also provides insight into a component of their problem solving processes. The reliance on others to assist in gaining clarity and validations regarding a problem or issue appears highly valued.

The implementation of stress reduction techniques code was also noted to emerge at "High" rates. This code refers to the individual's identification and utilization of effective stress management tools. Examples of statements related stress management strategies included

"Normally on the weekends I just try to stay away from here and really not think about it if I can you know. I do have children of my own. So the weekend we go and do things. Go with friends. My favorite thing to (do) is sit in my PJ's til five oclock on Saturday....Unhook."

As the quote illustrates the idea of compartmentalizes oneself from the job is exceptionally salient to this individual. The quote also appears to illustrate that this is not

necessarily an easy thing to do. The stress of the job can at times pervade into the social lives of individuals. However, the preceding quote appears to reflect recognition of this issue and the importance of maximizing relaxation time during the off hours. Other participants described their stress reduction techniques in terms of obtaining "Different perspectives and different ideas" to help moderate their stress levels. The concept of reflecting upon advice and ideas that are provided was viewed as an external support that provides internal relief. Feelings of perceived support by others was a common theme related to overall stress relief.

The coding related to performance successes also revealed "High" levels of occurrence. This code taps into the positive emotional reactions by the participants to perceived academic and behavioral successes of the students. Favorable reactions were reported regarding those "Light bulb moments" or when students finally mastered a concept that they had been working on. Participants placed significant value on their ability to make progress with their students. Participants frequently indicated that helping students to make progress is their sole purpose for entering and remaining in the teaching profession. It is important to note that intertwined with the performance successes were the positive emotional responses by the children to their successes. "...I mean whenever they are laughing or giggling or getting what you are teaching, that's worth it and you can forget all the other stuff." This quote suggests that staff are motivated not only by the student's obtainment of the content but also their surprise and enjoyment of the learning process.

The experience-university training code was endorsed when participants described the impact that formalized educational training or certifications on their decision to enter into or remain in their current position. This code was utilized when participants provided details on how university or formalized training prepared them for their position.

"It builds a discipline inside of you. That's what it did in terms for me. It built the discipline to deal with behaviors in more of an evidenced, analytical base. I was fortunate enough to have instructors that were able to instill that in me. There is a reason, there is a root in breaking it down. In getting down to that."

As this participant indicated, the core value in university experiences is to provide a strong basis and logical framework to guide your educational practices. Participants were also noted to refer to university training in regards to making themselves more marketable for their chosen profession. For example: "And then I went back and got my teaching certification, my alternative certification. And (to) make myself more marketable I went ahead and got the special education certification." This appears to reflect upon perceived value in the higher education preparatory training process.

As previously mentioned, access to educational support-individual refers primarily to readily available access or support from, teachers, mentors or relationships with previous university teachers or advisors. However, in order to meet criteria for this level it would be also have to be individuals that are within the classroom setting. This code occurred at the Medium range, and was primarily illustrated through the access of other team members such as special education co-teachers. As one teacher indicated, "...I got a great mentor out of that. I actually got two because they had another life skills

class in the same school.” The indication of mentor relationships that developed over the course of the participant’s career was viewed positively and as a support they counted on throughout the course of their school days.

Occupational aspirations-upward mobility positive code corresponded to the Medium range of occurrences. It was defined as an individual’s occupational plans for the future including moving to a supervisory position, administrative or other non-classroom based setting. The majority of statements in this area revolved around contemplation to move to administrative positions or special education curriculum or supervisory positions. One example included, “I would at some point would like to be an administrator. I would love to administer programs.” The potential for upward mobility was defined as an insulator based on the participants perception of having options outside that of being a classroom teacher. Even if they had no immediate plans to vacate, most participants believed options to be important to them.

Also corresponding to the Medium range of occurrences was increased time with students. This code was associated with statements that increased staff to student ratio provided educational or behavior benefit to students. Also, increased time working with the student may elicit a positive emotional reaction from the teacher. One exemplar included, “You know. It could be something as simple as when they do independent work have them sit next to a teacher versus sitting by themselves. That could be the difference between awesome behavior and running out of the classroom screaming and hollering.”

Availability and time to spend to meet the needs of each student was prominent within this coding category.

The experience-personal code was tapped when participants reported that personal experiences with individuals with disabilities may have impacted upon their decision to enter into or remain in their current position. The core themes in this category revolved around prior experiences both formal and informal that fostered interest in the individual pursuing their current occupation as a self-contained special education teacher.

"Well you know I thought about it recently because I didn't even. I had worked with the mentally disabled. I did it in eighth grade and high school, a little in college... I did Special Olympics and stuff like that and I worked with the disabled before. So it is very fulfilling..."

A sense of connection and satisfaction working with individuals with disabilities was the most prominent theme in this category.

Statements were coded using parent support positive when productive involvement and interactions with parents occurred. These interactions tended to result in enhanced trust and confidence in the teacher's ability to make positive change with the student. This code was typified by statements such as when, "We are, mostly for the benefit of the children, but in order to do that oftentimes adults come into the pictures, family, caregivers... Sometimes we get real lucky and have great parents." The nature of the interactions between parent and teacher was deemed crucial in fostering the skills of the student.

Culture and age as an insulator was coded for instances when these factors played a role in positively relating to and establishing a connection with the student. Embodied

in this code were statements such as "They want to know what TV shows I like and the kind of music I listen too. Sort of humanizing the teacher. Make us less of a goon eyed villain. It makes a big difference to the student." The importance of common ground and ability to communicate an interest in the aspects of the student was viewed as a bridge to improved relationship. The preceding quote taps most heavily on the age aspect of this code. This participant would go on to mention that because she is a younger teacher, she may indeed watch some of the same programs and listen to some of the same music as her students. Therefore in this case closeness in age to the student was viewed as an asset.

Two codes within the individual level corresponded to the Low range of occurrences. They were occupational aspirations-upward mobility negative or contentment with current job and having no plans to move out of the classroom-based setting and occupational aspiration-neutral or indication of a move to position in the educational field that is instructional in nature such as general education.

The data contained within this chapter illustrates a strong emergence of themes related to classroom/individual level insulators and district level stressors. A total of fourteen code categories and 230 references were included in the individual/classroom level insulators. This number of references was nearly three times greater than that of the next closest area (See Figure 2.).

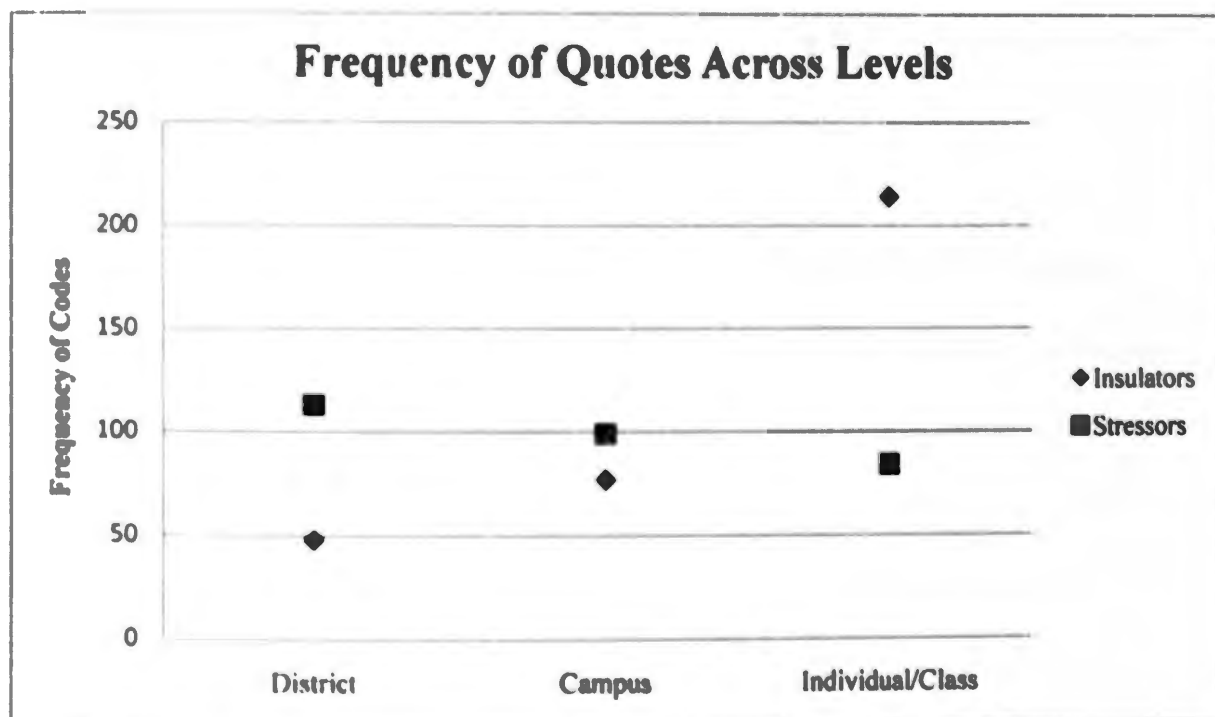


Figure 2. Frequency of Coding References.

The most prominent codes were references to positive inherent qualities of teachers, job related experiences and access to social supports. In contrast, district related concerns yielded the highest number of stress codes. Lack of educational useful or relevant training opportunities and paperwork and legal issues were among the most frequently identified district level stressors.

Although the campus level did not yield the highest overall number of references, it did contain the most frequently used code. Administrative support-negative was referenced 48 times over the eight participant transcripts. It is also interesting to note that individual/classroom level stressors yielded the lowest number of stress codes. The

potential relationships between these factors will be examined more thoroughly in the following chapter.

Data Analysis Summary

The results of the data analysis revealed a very high number of stress codes associated with district and campus level constructs. Moderate to very high numbers of insulators of stress were noted in campus and classroom/individual levels respectively. For the purpose of this analysis the focus will be placed on those codes that occurred at the Very High and High levels across the domains presented. As mentioned previously, the higher the occurrence of coding references the more likely the themes are to hold relevance to given areas (Stilmer, 2001). The number or frequency of references coded within data set, add robustness to the inferences made. The following information will focus the reader's attention on the frequency of occurrence with contextual interpretation. Contextual analysis or content interpretation is intended to begin the process of attributing meaning to the associated frequency counts (Stilmer, 2001).

As the information in previous chapter illustrated, there appeared to be an inverse relationship between the perceived pressures or stressors at the district level and that of perceived individual or classroom level insulators. This relationship can be conceptualized in terms of those things that are viewed as within and outside the control of the individual. For example, when examining factors that individual deemed outside their control, they would make mention to program guidelines and lack of curriculum supports. One participant made it clear that the district demonstrated limited awareness

or willingness to correct this issue. Although indicted through the data set as a High concern issue, the participants either felt powerless to change the programming deficit or were not interested in taking on such a huge project without the aid of financial compensation. The perception of district level stressors as being Very High could also relate to the participants limited knowledge on how to successfully navigate the system effectively. For example, participants made several mentions of not being aware of who was in charge of what programs or which person was the most appropriate one to contact to assist them with a given issue. This ambiguity in process and procedure could have also moderated the overall results obtained in this area.

In regard to the individual/classroom level insulators, the overwhelming themes included statements related to attribution of responsibility, current and previous job experiences and access to social supports. The teachers interviewed made frequent statements regarding their passion for the profession. Indications of personal responsibility for making positive changes in their classroom and for their students, was also noted. This internalizing of problems appeared to promote initiative type statements such as, "I'm the teacher and I am responsible for teaching my students." Therefore, it appears as if teaching professionals that are invested in assuring high quality education to students are not as deterred by lack of district responsiveness to their needs. As this statement infers, it appears as if attitude and perceived control to make change can significantly impact upon the perceived level of insulation to stressors. However, it is important to note that the Very High frequency of occurrences of codes in this area also

appeared to be influenced by the overall professional experiences of the individual and the access to social supports. Within the category of individual insulators, these two areas emerged at Very High levels. Therefore, it appears as if perceived skill as a professional and the ability to access supports in a social setting play a role in the overall insulating factors at this level.

District Level Stress Codes

An examination of the District level stress codes yielded an overwhelming pattern of training based, curriculum and systemic stressors. District stress codes were endorsed within the focus of the participant statements targeted district level issues such as lack of relevant or applicable training for this specific sub-population of teachers, non-responsiveness of district level personnel to the needs of the teachers and the perceived impacts of district mandated paperwork on the workload of the staff. This broad area was also used to reflect general statements of discontent regarding the manner in which problems were addressed at the district level.

Four areas of district level stress will be examined in the following section. The data presented in table 1.9 reflects a Very High frequency of references associated with the district level in-services that are not applicable and paperwork and legal requirements that are overwhelming to staff. An absence of formalized programming or consistency in the development of curriculum for self-contained classrooms and failure by district personnel to adequately and accurately describe the self-contained programs during the

hiring process, inconsistent or lack of feedback on district level procedures from supervisory staff corresponded to the High level.

Lack of educational supports/relevant training. Within the context of this area participants were exceptionally verbal regarding their overall discontent. Although they often gave the district praise for the provision of multiple opportunities to attend in-service trainings, they were generally unhappy with the quality or focus of the trainings. One consistent theme related to the lack of applicability of the trainings that were being provided. Participants frequently indicated that the majority of trainings appear to be most relevant to general education staff or that they are required to attend the same trainings year after year. Although the information was good, hearing it again did not add any perceived benefit to their professional practice. Another participant indicated dissatisfaction with being placed on an in-service “Track.” This created a situation where they received training on only one content area. This was deemed as problematic due to the fact that as a self-contained teacher you are responsible for teaching all subject areas. This was again another example of disconnect between the needs of general educators and that of this subpopulation of teachers. Other participants went as far as to say that they felt as if they were completely forgotten in regards to ins-service activities. One participant stated that it was almost as if they didn’t have a good fit for them, so they were simply told to attend something that had seats available. These type of comments appeared to reflect upon the general disconnect between the perceived needs of special education self-contained teachers and what was made available to them at the district

level. It was clear through discussions with participants that there also appeared to be an absence of an effective feedback tool or process to address this area of stress.

Paperwork and legal requirement stress. A Very High frequency of references was also noted in the area of paperwork and legal requirements. Participants made a substantial number of statements regarding the pressures associated with record keeping and assuring that their practices met with the legal letter of the law. The stress was often compounded by ever changing guidelines and a lack of cohesive training and guidelines for requirements. Many of the participants stated that they often feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of paperwork that is generated for each student. The amounts of time that are required to prepare for and participate in Admission Review and Dismissal Committee meetings for their students were viewed negatively. Participants frequently made statements that reflected resentment regarding this aspect of their job. The time that they spend on paperwork often interferes with provision of direct service to the students in their classroom. One participant made mention to how the time spent on paperwork instills a sense of guilt within her. Other participants described stress related to this area in terms of their own lack of organization skills. The participant continued by stating how easily the paperwork can pile up and become overwhelming and unmanageable.

Another aspect of stress associated with paperwork and legal requirements that emerged related to the ever changing nature of process. Many of the participants stated frustration regarding the frequent changes and reinterpretations of the process by district level staff. Often times, district staff will call teachers into meetings and tell them that

they will have to add things to their documentation or stop doing things that they have previously been told to do. The frustration is generally compounded by limited information on why the process has changed or what benefit the changes may make to the overall functioning of their students.

Lack of educational supports-curriculum. The absence of formalized programming or consistent curriculum standards was noted to emerge 12 times throughout the transcripts and therefore was categorized as High area of frustration and stress for staff. Teachers not only indicated this to be a district wide issue, but also expressed frustration that there did not appear to be any district level efforts to correct this particular issue. The interviewees verbalized that they felt solely responsible for creating and implementing self-contained curriculum. It is important to note that this was a consistent source of frustration across programs and academic levels. Although there was recognition on the part of the instructional staff that implementation was a part of their perceived job duties, creation of program standards was viewed as outside of their job parameters. One teacher indicated that she would be willing to assist the district in creating curriculum standards over the summer if compensation was provided. However, trying to create curriculum during the course of a school year was identified as overwhelming in lieu of other demands of the position. Other instructional staff indicated that they were not sure how this issue could be resolved, but they were clear as to what they would like regarding curriculum. One teacher stated that she would like to see a standardized set of academic materials in each of the self-contained classrooms and

training on the appropriate usage of those materials. Other interviewee's pointed out that with the push toward inclusion, it becomes even more important to not only standardize but align the self-contained curriculum with that of the general education setting. With that in mind, the lessons being taught in self-contained classrooms should have the same scope and sequence of that in the general education settings. This issue is highlighted in the follow excerpt:

"I wish that xxxxx had a curriculum for special life skills classes. Because building a curriculum is my weak point as far as...As far as my teaching goes, I don't know what to use. I don't have a lot of resources in my class. We are kind of a mish mash of whatever people have given us."

While it is viewed as stressful on the teachers to deal with this deficit, it also makes transition into the general education setting for special education children much more of a challenge. Other teachers viewed consistency of curriculum in terms of behavior management techniques that are implemented uniformly across campuses.

Lack of supports or isolation from district staff. Lack of full disclosure regarding the nature and scope of the self-contained position was also identified as a significant source of stress for four out of the eight participants. Multiple interviewees indicated that the district did not adequately prepare them for the academic and behavioral challenges that they would be faced with in the self-contained classrooms. One teacher went so far as to say that she felt deceived by the district.

Inconsistent or lack of feedback for district level staff was also identified as a stressor. Three of the eight teachers indicated poor or inconsistent feedback from district level special education personnel as an area of frustration. A review of the transcripts

revealed multiple occurrences of unproductive or unclear communication regarding procedural issues from supervisory staff. “Um, I feel like when I ask for something, it has to go through a hundred people and I never get an answer. I don’t know who to ask for certain things. I don’t know where to go? There is not like a list of: These are people that work in special ed. You ask this person about this stuff.” A lack of clear chain of command was a common theme from the majority of the interviewees. They were generally able to acknowledge that their campus had a district level supervisor, but felt that this person did little to assist them with day to day procedural issues that emerge. The interviewees often verbalized that they are on their own when attempting to resolve complicated procedural issues that arise. They often call their own behavior or practice into question in the absence of clear feedback from administrators. Two of the eight participants indicated concern over possible legal action by parents due to poor or no guidance regarding policy and procedures for special needs students.

District Level Insulators

In the area of district level insulators, only access to educational support-training emerged as a prominent code. This area corresponded to the High frequency of occurrences. Contained within this code were statements relating to adequate access to training resources or access to training within the district. It is important to note that this code was utilized whenever a participant made positive references to district level trainings or availability of training opportunities. It is important to recognize that this codes occurrence was primarily high due to the opportunity for training and educational

leave. However, the actual perceived benefit of this training is not reflected in this code. This distinction is important in that it reflects upon the participant's desire for and acknowledgment that training is important. Examination of statements coded in this area revealed that participants believed that opportunities for training were abundant, but that the district still had significant room for improvement. More specifically, the participants believed that the focus of future trainings should be on effective behavioral and instructional techniques that could be easily implemented in their classes.

Campus Level Stressors

Within the campus level, three coding areas comprised Very High to High frequencies of occurrence. Participants made multiple references to negative or unproductive support from administration and lack of collaboration with campus staff and paraprofessionals as significant sources of stress. These thematic areas are reflected in the table below.

Administrative support negative. A Very High number of references were noted to emerge within this coding category. Items coded in this area reflected heavily upon the individual participants overall dissatisfaction with the type or quantity of interactions with their building level administrators. Coding within this area also reflected heavily upon the participant's limited feelings of connection and positive collaboration with their administrators. It is also interesting to note that participants were generally aware of how much poor leadership on the campus impacts overall campus climate and their ability as professionals to successfully integrate students into the culture of the campus. Not only

could negative administrative support lead to stress on the individual professional, but the primary source of their stress was perceived inability to provide adequate service and social experiences to their students. This was illustrated through statements such as the administration or campus doesn't invite us to assemblies or to participate in other campus wide activities. This disconnection was directly attributed to lack of administrative involvement in the self-contained classroom settings.

As this code was explored more deeply, the effects of negative administrative support could also be observed in the participant's diminished sense of professionalism. For example, multiple statements regarding feeling as if the administrator did not trust in their abilities or feeling "Micromanaged" within their classroom was noted. Other participants expressed the opposite end of this involvement spectrum. One participant explained that they were introduced to their classroom setting and never saw the administrator again that year. The over involvement or under involvement of administrators in the day to day functioning of the self-contained classrooms suggest there is a perceived zone of comfort that lies somewhere in the middle of these to extremes. Self-contained teachers appear to want administrative involvement, but it must be the right type and amount. In general, the teachers interviewed did not indicate the presence of a feedback mechanism that could help to shape or alter the type or amount of supports that were available to them from the campus level administration.

Lack of educational supports-collaboration. This code reflects heavily upon statements related to limited or unproductive collaboration with other instruction

personnel at the campus level. It could include but was not limited to limited access to lesson plans or other instructional aides or poor overall communication related to the educational needs of the self-contained students. The participants made multiple references to the stressors associated with the educational inclusion process as a whole. Their comments ranged from general education staff not really wanting their students in their classes or not knowing what their involvement should be, to a complete disconnection of the general education from the special needs students and staff when in the inclusion environment. Throughout the interviews there was a sense that general education staff felt underprepared or unwilling to work collaboratively with other special education teachers and students. There was an undertone of fear and uncertainty on the part of the general education teachers regarding how best to integrate special needs children in their classroom. If these issues were not addressed, it tended to lead to heavy or sole reliance on paraprofessionals to provide instruction to the students when in the general education setting. This parallel instruction or class within a class type arrangement appears to run counter to the intent of the inclusionary instruction. Lack of training and education for the general education staff on the inclusion process may be one of the causes for current state of the inclusion process being reported.

Paraprofessionals as a source of stress. Within the context of this code, stress related to effective utilization of paraprofessional staff was explored. It was interesting to note that the addition of aide support within the classroom was not always viewed as an area of support. The participants explained that although they appreciate having access to

paraprofessionals, the delineation of duties and overall team cohesion can at times be problematic. Upon examination of the transcriptions data, participants frequently made mention of having to be a manager of people. One participant went on to say that this was an aspect of the job that she had not considered upon entry and at times it can be difficult. An additional stressor was noted in having to balance the professional relationships with the personal relationships that are formed through working in close quarters. It was viewed as a challenge to develop and maintain this balance over time.

The other key aspect of stress associated with paraprofessional staff was the varying level of skills and experiences they bring to the position. Although most paraprofessionals were viewed as trainable, some were viewed as a bad fit for the position. Multiple references to differences in opinions or lack of follow through by the Paraprofessionals on instructions were noted. This created an atmosphere of frustration and distrust in the ability of the paraprofessional staff. One participant highlighted this issue by indicating how crucial it is to be able to trust in the staff that you work with. The solidarity of the team was viewed as paramount in the successful running of the classroom. In the absence of this trusts stress appears to be the most salient by product. A final aspect of stress associated with paraprofessional staff was related to high levels of job experience. One participant reported that it can be very stressful to come into the class as a new teacher and work with paraprofessionals that have been in that classroom for ten or fifteen years. The participant went on to say that because the paraprofessional has been in the position so long, the students recognize the Para as the authority figure.

This power differential can cause difficulty for the teacher in that the students may not look to them for guidance or respond favorably to correction and disciplinary actions. It was also interesting to note that within the context of this situation, the paraprofessional may be unwilling to change or alter the manner in which they provide assistance in the classroom. This can create a stylistic disconnect between how the teacher would like to run the class and what the paraprofessional is willing to do to support this shift.

Campus Level Insulators

Two prominent areas of campus level supports emerged from the data set. They included access to educational support-campus and paraprofessional support as an insulator. Both areas listed contained a frequency of references that corresponded to the Very High level of occurrences. Access to educational support campus was coded when participants indicated a heavy reliance on campus administrators and support staff personnel to assist them in dealing effectively with challenging situations on campus. These challenges could be academic or behavioral in nature. Reliance on support staff personnel and campus level administrators was deemed as a significant area of potential support. In the cases where the relationship between administrators, support staff and teachers were viewed as strong and collaborative, the participant's outlook appeared positive. This positive outlook was demonstrated by participant statements such as my administrator or support staff person is very responsive to my needs, will assist me with challenging parents or students, provide guidance regarding legal matters, and is involved with my students but not over involved. Another interesting point that emerged from this

set of coded data related to the administrator and support staffs connection to the students. Multiple teachers stated how meaningful it was when administrators acknowledged them and their students as they transitioned from class to class and area to area within the building. They elaborated that when the administrators actually know my students names and talk to them, it really affects me positively. These social exchanges in combination with legal and behavioral support were the primary themes that emerged throughout the coded references.

Classroom/Individual Level Stressors

The Classroom/Individual level of stressors focused on thematic content relating to intrinsic or perceived characteristics of the individual as well as stressors associated directly to the internal workings of the classroom setting. These pressures could include negative interactions with parents, feelings of inadequacy or ineffectiveness by the teachers and a focus on stressors or pressures that may be outside of the staff's ability to change or alter. The following table provides a listing of the most frequently utilized codes for this area (See Table 2.1).

Parent support negative. This code was endorsed when the participants made mention of negative interactions with parents. There were two major themes that emerged through the examination of this code. The first related to parent over involvement. There were several variations on this theme. However, multiple participants made mention to stress associated with parents who never seem pleased with the instruction or work that is being done with their child. There was a sense that no matter how hard one work with

their child, nothing that the instructional staff can do will be viewed favorably. The subtext often reflected feelings of helplessness. In conjunction with this theme, was the notion of unrealistic expectations regarding student progress. At times, there is a significant mismatch between the rate of progress the student is capable of and the demanded levels of progress by the parents. This can often result in disagreements in meetings and an overall breakdown in the relationship between teacher and parental units.

The second major thematic category revolved around parent under involvement. Multiple references to parents that are unresponsive to teacher attempts to communicate with them or parents indicating that they believe that educating their children is the sole responsibility of the professionals. Substantial levels of frustration were associated with the content in this area. Participants often indicated that significant issues in the home setting tend to undo the progress that the children make over the course of the school day. One participant stated that it is almost as if teachers have to spend the majority of a day putting the child back together due to the negative influences in the home setting. Parent participation in the educational process was deemed as essential and without it, progress can be limited.

Qualities or characteristics of ineffective teachers. The source content contained within this code related specifically to behaviors that may lead to increased levels of stress. Failure to ask for assistance in instances where it would be warranted, difficulty disconnecting from stressful situations or inability to compartmentalize ones'

self from the stress of the job were exemplars of this code. This area provided a window into the thinking process of the professionals interviewed. Throughout the discussions related to problem issues in the classroom multiple occurrences of inability to disconnect from job related stressors emerged. The most common examples revolved around an inability by the professional to separate their work lives from their social lives. Examples included teachers stating that they simply could not stop worrying about their children over the summer and at the end of the school days. In combination with this worry, indications of its negative impacts on their home lives were prevalent.

The second most common theme reported in the qualities or characteristics of ineffective teachers included worry about things that they had no control over. These issues included but were not limited to would their student's parents treat them with dignity and respect, would their students follow through on job aspirations in the future, go to college, get involved in illegal activities. The negative implications of excessive worry were again highlighted through reports of stress, impacts on home life activities and relationships and physical manifestations of stress such as disturbances in sleep.

Performance failures. The area of performance failures was characterized by reports of stress regarding the lack of academic, social or emotional progress of the students that were being served. It also encapsulated statements of shaken confidence by teachers related to their inability to successfully change or intervene with their students. The most prominent feature of this area revolved around failing to identifying the techniques that "will change attitudes and behaviors." The staff often reported that it is

stressful for them, but it is also stressful for the student. The integrated stress experience compounds the feelings of frustration between the student and teacher. The extreme nature of the disabilities that are served through this program make it that much more difficult to identify and consistently implement techniques that will bring about positive change for students. One participant went as far as to say that the lack of progress and performance failures exemplified how difficult the position is and that “they (Teachers) vacate because it is hard.” The lack of perceived ability to provide measurable benefits to students was interlaced with statements relating to frustration by staff. They not only mentioned the challenges of the students but their own personal struggles in identifying strategies and techniques to could bring about positive change.

Classroom/Individual Level Insulators

The Classroom/Individual level insulators were intended to provide insight into those strategies, resources and personal experiences and training that impact positively upon the teacher. It also provided thematic content related to values and core beliefs of teachers that impacted positive upon their outlook for themselves and their students. There were three codes that emerged as occurring within the Very High range of occurrence. Table 2.2 provides a listing of these codes.

Positive qualities or characteristics of teachers. This code was utilized when participants made mention of personal factors related to resiliency, organizational skills, ability to overcome obstacles, strength based assessments of students and ability to

compartmentalize and maintain a sense of rational detachment in the face of crisis situations. It also reflected an understanding of the psychosocial needs of their students. Through analysis of the comments of the participants the concept of self-reliance, compassion and honesty were among a few traits that teachers associated with effective teachers. The idea of intuition and ability to read emerging crisis situations was also expressed through the transcripts. More specifically, several participants indicated that it is essential for teachers to trust their intuition and be able to “Think on their feet.” This trust in ones training and experience was most prominent when teachers were discussing response to crisis situations. One teacher indicated that students often engage in problem behaviors to get a negative reaction from the teacher, and if you respond in that way the situation will escalate. Through training and experience teachers can respond quickly and effectively in crisis moments.

A second theme that emerged from the area of positive qualities of teachers was the importance of keeping their personal life separate from their professional life. This reflected an understanding that there must be a balance between work and social activities. This ability to recognize the potential impacts of job related stressors and compartmentalize these stressors was indicated as an asset.

A third theme that was present through the transcripts was belief in the children’s ability to be successful and make progress through the educational program. Without fail the participants explained that they are primarily in the education profession because they love working with children and want to be a guiding influence on their lives. The idea of

teachers enjoying the role of academic, social and emotional educators was also clearly delineated through the coding process.

Experience-job. This code relates to the past job experiences that may directly or indirectly influence an individual's decision to remain in their current job. This code could include but was not limited to negative experiences in another field that may have pushed them to change positions, work in the private sector with disabled individuals, previous teaching experiences and prior years of experience in their current position. The most salient examples involved statements of practical teaching experiences both in and out of the public school setting. For example one participant began their career in a Mother's Day Out program, which provided support for students with disabilities to very young children. Another participant explained that she initially worked with students on the autism spectrum and then decided to pursue a career in the field of teaching. A final example revealed exposure to individuals with disabilities through the Special Olympics program. The commonality among the examples provided was that the individuals felt a connection to the population which guided them to the teaching field. It is also important to note that as the individuals obtained certification they actively pursued special education positions in self contained programs.

Access to social supports. Interactions with others outside of the school setting as a means of gaining clarity and advice regarding school related issues was coded under access to social supports. It was generally utilized when participants made reference to soliciting the advice of individuals that was deemed as valuable in solving a presenting

academic or behavioral challenge. The concepts presented in this code are embodied by feelings of support by husbands, friends, family, church and significant others. One participant discussed the importance of understanding family members in the following quote “I mean it is very important. If he didn’t support me and understand why I do what I do, it would be very hard. And (for) him to understand how hard my job is and what I deal with.” As this quote illustrates the need for connection to a social network and understanding by those individuals is of significant importance to teaching professionals. In the absence of a solidified social network, the stress associated with position can be viewed as unmanageable. It is important to note that multiple teachers described an inherent barrier to social support. There were several participants that indicated that reliance on friends that are also in the teaching field was deemed as more beneficial than those not in the field of education. This disconnect appeared to be directly associated with the non-teachers inability to understand the trials and tribulations of the education field. Whereas, other teaching professionals that were also friends were described as better able to relate to the concerns that were expressed to them. This is significant in that a vast majority of the participant’s partners had either been in or currently practice in the field of education.

Hypotheses

At the outset of this study four hypothesis were generated. They included:

- It is hypothesized that increased access to paraprofessional and professional staff in both direct and indirect capacities will decrease

overall levels of perceived stress and increase retention rates of highly qualified teachers.

- It is hypothesized that increased administrative support will reduce levels of role ambiguity and increase retention rates of special education teachers.
- It is hypothesized that salary and level of educational training will impact upon the individual's commitment to his/her current teaching position.

It initial intent of the study was also to obtain teacher perspectives on the following sub questions:

- In what ways, if any, does gender have an impact upon retention rates of special education teachers?
- In what ways, if any, does age play a role in reducing levels of stress and effect retention rates?
- In what ways, if any, does years of experience impact upon an individual's intention to remain in his/her current job?

Impact of Increased Paraprofessional and Other Professional Support

When examining the impacts of paraprofessional support there were two major themes occurred throughout the course of the data. The majority of teachers felt strongly that they could not implement their programs with integrity without access to paraprofessional staff. The concept of teamwork and teaming was ripe through the transcripts. Being able to function effectively as a cohesive unit with paraprofessionals

was of exceptional importance to the staff. There were multiple examples provided that indicated that reliance is preceded by trust, and this trust could only be developed by open and honest communication with all parties. Other benefits associated to the paraprofessionals included their ability to provide direct instruction to the students after the lesson is presented. This frees up the teacher to prepare for meetings and document academic and behavioral progress of the student. Other benefits were the Para's ability to step in to work with students if a power struggle has ensued between the teacher and a student. If these power struggles lead to crisis situations, the Paraprofessionals were also noted to assist in the de-escalation process. Therefore, two basic insulating functions of the Paraprofessionals included assistance in providing instructional and social/emotional support to students and feelings of collaboration and trust by the teacher in the paraprofessional abilities to provide the previously mentioned support. This second category associates very heavily with the importance of effective collaboration and teamwork within the self contained classroom environment.

Although paraprofessional staff was generally viewed as beneficial in the educational process, there were some stressors that emerged in regard to this human resource. For example it was not sufficient to simply have a paraprofessional. The individual that was in the role must be trained, willing to work collaboratively and most importantly care about the students that are in the self-contained programs. It is important to note that the experience of the paraprofessional was somewhat of a double edged sword. Self-contained teachers need paraprofessionals with experience. However,

stress can emerge when the paraprofessional's number of years of experience exceeded that of the teachers.

Although there was Very High levels of support for the hypothesis that access to paraprofessionals impact positively upon retention and reduce overall perceived stress, the results were mixed. It appears that this factor is moderated significantly by the quality of the paraprofessional's training and level of experience, as well as the teacher's level of training and expectations for the paraprofessional.

Administrative Support on Role Ambiguity and Increase Retention

Very High levels of support were obtained for this hypothesis. The code that associated most closely with this hypothesis was that of access to educational support-campus. Participants frequently reported feeling supported when administrators assumed the role of assisting them with academic or behavioral challenges. Indications of a positive and collaborative relationship between administrators, support staff and teachers were associated with positive outlook toward their jobs. This positive outlook was illustrated by statements such as my administrator or support staff person is very responsive to my needs, will assist me with challenging parents or students, provide guidance regarding legal matters, and is involved with my students but not over involved. The administrator's attempts to stay connected to the special needs students in this instructional arrangement were also deemed as an area of support. Many times throughout the transcripts it was explained how meaningful it was when administrators acknowledged special educators and their students as they transitioned from class to class

and area to area within the building. The positive effects of social encounters, legal and behavioral support were the most salient themes that emerged throughout the coded references. This connection with the administrative team on the campus appears to substantially moderate the feelings of isolation that some self-contained teachers report.

Impacts of Salary

Thematic content related to the impact of salary was assessed through four codes. Each code assessed varying facets of impact of monetary compensation on intent to remain in or vacate the position. Medium to Low levels support was obtained that would support the impact of salary on teacher's intent to remain in the position. It is important to note that many of the participants reported a general satisfaction with salary, but that salary had no impact on their decision to remain in their current position. It is important to note that the teachers became very impassioned when this topic of salary was broached. Some teachers indicated that they would hope that salary or money would be very low on the list of reasons why a person would join the teaching field.

Level of Educational Training

Formalized educational training was viewed as an essential component to the participant's current occupational choice. However it is important to note that they generally placed higher levels of importance on direct work with students in building their capacity to effect positive academic and behavioral change. Those individuals that either obtained or were in process of obtaining master levels degrees had a propensity to discuss their desire to someday pursue alternative occupations within the field of

education. For example three out of the four participants who obtained, or were in the process of getting their Masters degrees indicated they would someday like to work in a supervisory or district level curriculum position. Therefore some tentative support was obtained for the negative impacts of level of educational training on retention of teachings in self-contained positions.

Demographic Variables as Stressors and Insulators

Questions related to age, gender, years of teaching experience and general experiences with special needs students was examined to determine the possible impact of these factors on teacher's decision to remain in or vacate their current teaching positions. Data related to the impacts of gender was also collected. Of the eight participants interviewed, six were women and two were men.

Impacts of gender on retention. When attempting to address the question of potential impacts of gender on retention rates of special education teachers the both qualitative and quantitative data were considered. A Chi Square analyses comparing men and woman on stressors and insulators was conducted, and the data were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = .65$, $df = 1$, $p = .42$). Although it was not significant, it is important to note that the average number of stressors reported by women was 15% greater than that of men. This difference may be "clinically" significant (i.e., matter in the real world) without being statistically significant. However, such conclusions would necessitate further study." It is also important to recognize that although the participants failed to

respond directly to the question of the impact of age on retention, some tentative conclusions can be made.

Table 9.

Average Stressors and Insulators by Gender

Gender	Stressors	Insulators
Women	38	45
Men	23	36

As Table 9. illustrates, the weighted average number of reported stressors by women was 15 points greater than that of the men. This could indicate a greater awareness of stressors in the work place by women or perhaps a greater unwillingness by men to report stressors in the workplace. The insulating factors revealed a 9% decrease in reported number of insulators by the men. This suggests that men may access fewer supports throughout their work day and outside the academic setting. It may also suggest that women are more apt to ask for and accept supports when problems emerge. Although questions related to the impact of gender on retention rates were posed, limited information was obtained. The participants appeared to have difficulty conceptualizing a potential link between gender and intent to remain in or vacate the position. This suggests two possible explanations. The first is that the question was posed in a way that was unclear to the participants, or that the participants may not believe that this factor

impacts negatively on their decisions to remain or vacate the position. Therefore, only tentative support was noted for this hypothesis.

Impact of age on retention. In order to obtain information on the hypothesis related to the impact of age on retention, both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. Because of the strong correlation between age and years of experience, the two hypothesis questions related to these factors were combined and the data was synthesized.

Table 10.

Impacts of Age on Intent to Remain in or Vacate Positions

Occupational Aspiration Codes	Age Ranges			
	26-33	34-41	42-49	57+
Upward Mobility Positive	1	4	5	0
Upward Mobility Negative	3	3	0	0
Upward Mobility Lateral	2	0	0	0
Upward Mobility Exit	3	0	0	0

The information presented in Table 10. suggests that individuals in the age ranges of 26-33 generated the highest frequency of occupational aspiration references. They indicated the highest rates of negative, exit and lateral codes. This suggests a dichotomy of thoughts related to professional mobility within this age range. Both the occupational aspiration lateral and exit codes reflect upon leaving the self-contained teaching position. While the occupational aspiration negative code reflects upon their contentment with their current position with no intention to vacate. A review of the data indicated that this

age range either expressed high levels of contentment or high levels of intent to vacate. The 34-41 and 42 to 49 groups had the greatest intent to vacate their positions for other roles in education. As previously mentioned, the upward mobility positive code reflects upon an individual's intention on consideration to vacate their current position for a job in administration or other non-classroom based settings in the future. It is important to note that this occupational aspiration code appeared to have a positive impact on rates of retention and attrition. When participants discussed moving into supervisory positions it was generally with the caveat of the move being part of their mid-range to long range goals. Almost without exception they viewed the option to leave the classroom as improving their overall outlook on their current job. It is important to note that the 57+ range failed to yield any quotes that related to occupational aspirations. There was only one individual in this age range and when asked the question related to how age might impact upon retention, she simply shrugged her shoulders, laughed and said "O.K." This may indicate that it was something that she either has not thought about or chose not to discuss further within the course of the interviews. In addition to the quantitative data, and analysis of the quotes related to age were also reviewed. Throughout the transcripts, younger teachers reported age as an asset in that they may be able to relate to the students' social preferences with great ease. One teacher stated,

"I have found that as a relatively younger teacher, I have found that my age has been a benefit to me. I think that part of that is because the students see me as less like the other adults in their lives."

The more mature teachers did acknowledge a possible gap, but believed that it had a minimal impact on their overall ability to form sound relationships with the students. One participant stated “Age, as I get older there is probably a gap. I may not relate. Anyone would say there is a gap between you and your student’s age. You can’t fake it or deny it.” The participant went on to indicate that acceptance of the difference is part of dealing effectively with it. Other associated information related to the impact of age on retention included statements related to overall physical health and vitality. One participant indicated that in order to remain in this type of instructional arrangement, teachers have to have the stamina to keep pace with potentially assaultive and aggressive students. It is also important to note that teachers with fewer years of experience tended to rely more heavily on mentors and other more experienced team members to assist in remediating challenging academic, systemic and behavioral issues. Age did not appear to significantly impact upon the teacher’s feelings of isolation and recognition of the importance of meeting with and dialoging with other professionals that also teach in self-contained classrooms. Access to this type of support was universally viewed as a support.

Based on the information obtained, only tentative conclusions can be drawn on the impacts of age on retention. However, it is clear from this sample that as individuals age, increased thoughts of moving to administrative positions also increases. Another tentative conclusion included that younger participants appear to have greater thoughts or

intentions to exit the field for general education positions or positions outside of special education self contained classes.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Within the course of this chapter the overall findings of the research will be presented. Supporting information from the literature will also be discussed in relations to the overall findings. Next the contributions and implications to the literature of this research study will also be addressed. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research and a closing summary of the study.

When first conceptualizing this study, an extensive review of previous research was conducted. It was clear throughout the literature, that students in self-contained special education classrooms pose a special set of challenges to educators due to physical, emotional and mental challenges (Brownell, Smith, & McNellis, 1997). High levels of attrition in the field of special education, makes research in this area of particular importance. Rates of attrition were noted to be as exceptionally high. One study placed rates as high as one third of special education teachers leaving the profession within one year. (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995). Data obtained within the course of this study supported the notion that younger teachers or teachers with fewer years of experience tend to have occupational aspirations that may lead them to exit the field, move to positions outside that of the self-contained classrooms or choose to work for a few years and then pursue positions in the fields of administration.

From the outset of this research study the intent was to analyze four broad factors that may impact both positively and negatively upon self-contained special education teacher's intent to remain in or vacate their current teaching positions. These factors included access professional and paraprofessional staff, administrative support, materials and supplies, perceived levels of stress and coping, level of educational training, and salary. Factors related to age and gender were also addressed. The findings of this study suggested that the three most prominent stressors included lack of relevant district based training, administrative support and paperwork and legal challenges. The most prominent insulators to job related challenges included access to campus based resources such as administrators and other support staff, job experiences and a teacher's strong belief that they can make positive change for students with significant disabilities. It is important to note that salary did not emerge as a significant stressors or insulator within this study.

The issue of relevant training within the district yielded significant levels of overall discontent from special education self-contained teachers. Without exception the participants in this study indicated that training opportunities were plentiful, but often did not apply to their teaching positions. They felt that the trainings were primarily geared toward general education professionals or that the trainings that they receive were repetitive and fail to provide new and useful information. This repetition may be somewhat the result of new accountability standards requirements for teachers that force districts to be somewhat more rigid in their offerings (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). As Zabel and Zabel point out, nationally recognized standards do insure that certain facets of

teacher preparation are completed, but national standards may also hinder other types of training that are also perceived as useful to the staff.

Lack of administrative support also emerged as a significant source of stress for teachers in self contained classrooms. Participants in this study indicated significant levels of dissatisfaction with administrators who did not trust in their teaching abilities, failed to provide adequate support during challenging meetings with parents or failed to successfully integrate their students into the culture of the campus (e.g., not invited to assemblies, field trips, or to participate in school-wide activities, etc.), or to take an active role in their classrooms (e.g., visits to the classroom, interacting with the students, calling students by names, etc.). These emerging themes paralleled the work of Gersten and colleagues (2001). Their study indicated that when administrative support is perceived as low, stress levels of teachers tend to increase. With increase in stress job dissatisfaction increases and level of job commitment decrease (Gersten et al., 2001). Therefore significant levels of support were obtained for the impact of administrative support on an individual's decisions to vacate their teaching position.

Paperwork and legal challenges also emerged as a significant area of stress. As the number of educational meetings for students increased, the demands on the teaching staff to complete relevant forms also increased. Several teachers described it as a "Necessary Hassle," while others indicated it substantial detracted from their ability to provide direct services to students. Participants also stated that because of the high probability of legal reprisal, they often spend a vast majority of their days documenting

their instructional practices. The stress associated with the clerical duties of special education paperwork was previously reported in the work of Menlove and colleagues (2001). Not only did he report paperwork to be a source of stress, but also an area where paraprofessional support might be useful (Menlove et al., 2003).

In relation to insulators to the stress associated with self contained teaching positions campus level supports were viewed as extremely important. Administrative support, access to paraprofessional staff and strong belief that positive change can be made with students were among the most prominent factors. Positive and collaborative communication with the campus level administration was noted to be exceptionally important to self-contained teachers. Being able to count on administrators to assist in dealing with difficult parents and working through legal issues associated with special education were two prominent features of a strong teacher administrator relationship. Participants also highlighted the importance of being able to discuss classroom and school based issues in a collaborative manner with administration.

The concept of collaborative problem solving and decision making was clearly indicated in the literature as impacting positively upon levels of job commitment (Rosenholtz, 1989). Perceive administrative support was also noted to be an incentive for remaining in their position (Otto & Arnold, 2005). Moreover, when teachers perceived administrative support as positive, they tended to report lower levels of role confusion issues and decreased levels of overall stress (Gersten et al., 2001.). Finally, the importance of inclusion of special education students in campus life was also indicated as

highly important. A supportive administration was defined by their ability to include and acknowledge students with disabilities into the daily activities of the campus. It was identified as crucial for administrators to know the children in self-contained classes, to insure that special needs students had access to assemblies, field trips and other campus events and feel welcome and accepted when attending those events. It is worth noting that the campus administrator was viewed as the single most important person in establishing a positive climate on each of the campuses. Based on the data collected in this study, the level of administrative support does appear to impact upon an individual's decision to remain in or vacate a teaching position (Gersten et al., 2001).

Access to paraprofessional support did emerge as significant insulator or support within the classroom setting, but the results also yielded something unexpected. Self-contained teachers at times also viewed paraprofessionals as a significant source of stress. There were multiple statements by teachers that related to difficulties managing paraprofessionals and stress related to a lack of shared vision in how the class should be run. Therefore, the perceived benefit of paraprofessionals in the classroom were moderated by their ability to work collaboratively with the classroom teacher, have a shared vision for how the classroom would be run, and the classroom teachers ability to trust that instructional support would be carried out with integrity. The importance of the having a shared vision was highlighted in the work of Weiskopf, who described increased levels of stress upon individuals in terms of goal dissonance (1980). In short, dissonance occurs when there is a mismatch between the teacher's vision of how the class should be

operated and how instructional services are actually being carried out for the benefit of the student. Therefore, shared vision in method and mode of the provision of instructional services is paramount.

When initially researching possible factors that might impact positively on retention rates, years of teaching experience did emerge as a potential insulating factor. Although the research does point out that individuals with fewer years of teaching experience tend to report the highest rate of job dissatisfaction and probability of vacating their positions, it may not present the whole picture (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007; Shreeve, Goetter, Norby, Griffith, Stueckle, Michele, & Midgley, 1986; Singer, 1992). The studies reviewed failed to include relevant work experiences outside of the school system. The current study seemed to suggest that previous job experiences can have a positive impact on teachers entering into and remaining in self-contained positions. For example, several participants stated emphatically, that if they had not held previously held positions as classroom aides in self-contained classes, they would have not been adequately prepared for the challenges of the setting. This is important in that experience viewed more broadly may have greater salience to retention than that of a more narrow view such as years of teaching experience. Another important experience factor related to discontent with prior non-educational jobs and work with disabled individuals via day care type settings.

This study also attempt to tap into internal attributes of teachers that seem resilient to the pressures of the self-contained teaching position. This was done by asking

each participant to list several characteristics are qualities that they felt were important for self-contained teachers to possess. Some of the most frequently listed factors included: an ability to stay organized, work collaboratively with classroom and campus based personnel, be an advocate for children and most importantly be impassioned and make connections with their student in order to assist them to learn, grow and thrive.

What is most interesting is how closely being an advocate for children and the importance of relationships in the learning process related to research on resiliency to burn out. One previously cited study indicated that teacher who were unable to foster relationships or connections with the students they teach were very likely to experience increased disciplinary issues with students and higher levels of stress that could lead to burnout (Haberman, 2005).

Age and gender was also reviewed through the course of this study. Although no significant differences between subjects were noted, some interesting data did emerge. The youngest group of teachers indicated with greater frequency occupational aspirations that did not include remaining in their current teaching positions. These finding appear to closely resemble the findings of Miller, Brown, and Smith. Their study indicated that younger teachers more frequently reported intent to leave their special education teaching positions when compared to older individuals (Miller et al., 1999). However, what the study failed to provide was information on where the individuals were exiting to. Within this study, younger teachers most frequently reported that if they did leave, they would pursue work outside of education or move into another special education or general

education position. It is important to note that as individuals aged, they more frequently reported intentions to move into a supervisory type position. It is also interesting to note that the participant that fell in the oldest age range demographic reported no occupational aspirations. However, it is difficult to attribute any significant meaning to this portion of the data due to the fact that only one individual made up this demographic. One note of caution should be pointed out to the reader as they review this section of the data. There is a very high correlation between years of experience and age. Therefore, the construct of age may be less salient than years of experience (Olivarez & Arnold, 2006).

The impact of gender on retention was also examined. A Chi Square test of significance was conducted, and failed to reveal any significant differences between groups. However, it is important to note that the female group reported stressors occurring at 15 points greater rates than that of the men. This could indicate a greater awareness of stressors in the work place by women or perhaps a greater unwillingness by men to report stressors in the workplace. The research in this area is very limited. However, these finding appear to be loosely related to higher levels of reported stress by women and difficulty compartmentalizing and depersonalizing from stress related factors (Crane & Iwanicki, 1986). However, as noted previously, limited agreement on biological factors associated with retention and attrition are prevalent in the literature. The insulating factors revealed a 9 point decrease in reported number of insulators by the men. This may also be tentatively related to a propensity by male individuals to

compartmentalize from stress related factors and fail to acknowledge the possible impacts of them (Crane & Iwanicki, 1986).

Salary was addressed in terms of its impact on an individual's willingness to enter into and remain in self-contained settings. The research was mixed on the impact of salary on an individual's commitment or intent to remain in a teaching position. Research by Mark and Anderson (1985) indicated that as beginning salary increased the rate at which teachers were retained also increased. However, the results of this study appear to more closely resemble the results of Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004), who found no link between the variable of salary and an individual's decision or intent to remain in a position. The results of this study further correlate with their assumption that work climate was more salient link to retention than Salary (Billingsley et al., 2004).

The implications of the identified factors related to attrition and retention suggest that positive and effective collaboration are significant. The participants overall outlook on the educational process appeared to relate most heavily to connections with coworkers, administrators and other professionals. The teacher's ability to trust in the individuals that they work with was paramount in effective and efficient classroom operation. One participant summed it up very eloquently by indicating that positive relationships and respect from coworkers and colleagues tend to humanize the job that they are charged with. I believe that this speaks volumes as to what the true needs are for self-contained teachers. It's not materials, it's not salary or other monetary compensation, it is the acknowledgment that their job is a challenging one, and that the

students they work with deserve the same basic rights that all children have: To learn and experience academic, social and emotional success.

Implications to the Field of Psychology

The provision of mental health services in schools tends to focus heavily on meeting the educational and social-emotional needs of special education students (Commissioners Rules of Texas, 2007). The results of the current study suggest that in order to provide adequate service to students, support to classroom teachers is essential. Although this is certainly not a new concept in the field of psychology, this study provides a somewhat different perspective on the types of supports that are deemed beneficial by self-contained special education teachers. As previously mentioned, the perceived connection or relationship of the teacher and students to administrative and support staff appears to be paramount in fostering a positive change for individuals in self-contained classrooms. As school psychologists become more cognizant of types of stressors that teachers are experiencing and the factors that are deemed to be insulating to these stressors, they become better equipped to facilitate positive change for teachers. As instructional staff experience greater perceived levels of support, they appear to be better able to focus on providing quality instruction to their students. A secondary implication may relate to the training needs of school psychologists. It has been the experience of this practitioner that university training programs tend to focus heavily on assessment, intervention design and implementation. Although these are crucial aspects of the school psychology profession, they may not be sufficient to promote positive change within

educational systems. Perhaps within the delivery of the consultation classes, it may be prudent to include an increased focus on relationship factors and rapport building with students and staff. It may also be necessary to more closely examine system-based factors, such as the importance of administrative support and methods to promote collaboration between special education and general education teachers and other district level staff. These two factors seem to relate heavily to self-contained teachers perceived ability to function successfully within their given educational settings.

Future Directions

The impacts of the insulators and stressors associated with retention and attrition of self-contained teachers needs further investigation. The limitations of this study provide suggestions for future research. For example, due to the homogeneous nature of the sample and the participants' resistance to directly answering questions related to the impacts of age and gender on retention, limited insight was obtained on these factors. This issue was compounded by the overall makeup with district from which the sample was selected. As the demographic information from the human resources department indicated, the makeup of the district is primarily White non-Hispanic women. So, although the sample reflected favorably upon the chosen site for research, the research has limited generalization to other districts that have dissimilar demographic make-ups. Future studies should seek to obtain samples that contain greater diversity to more adequately address the possible impacts of age and gender on retention and attrition.

Although originally not proposed for this study, exploratory examination of the impacts of gender via the use of a Chi Square results revealed non-significant results. However, the percentage data obtain hint that there may indeed be a difference that would warrant further study. It was unexpected that the levels of difference between men and women would be so high on stressors and low on insulators. This may suggest differences in how each of the categories are perceived by gender or may hint at the underlying manner in which the varying genders choose to cope with job stress. Future research may want to include more interview questions related to gender differences and probe more deeply regarding how each gender perceives stress and perceives available coping strategies.

Other issues that arose during this study will hopefully provide insight into potential issues for future research. For example, during the process of Member Checks, there was only a 50% response rate to the emails that were sent out. Thus, perhaps a better method of collecting validity data might be to obtain phone numbers from participants and utilize emails as well as phone calls to obtain feedback. However, given the busy nature of the participant's jobs the proposed method may not yield improvements in response rates.

Additionally, some participants were asked follow up questions to gain clarity on their responses. Again only 50% of the participants responded by the second and third requests. Consideration of multiple sources of contact such as email and phone should be considered in future studies.

Conclusion

This study revealed many potential stressors and insulators associated with self-contained special education teaching positions. Although training needs emerged as a significant factor in the perceptions of job related stress and insulation to those stressors, it appears almost insignificant compared to the relationship variables. More specifically, this study appeared to point squarely at how crucial relationships and open communication with administration, professional support staff and paraprofessional can be to self-contained teachers. These three resources emerged and reemerged throughout the interviews. Therefore, these factors should be viewed as no less than pivotal in bolstering or hindering teacher's pursuit of educational excellence for their students and the development of a long, fruitful and satisfying occupational choice.

REFERENCES

- Abel, M. H., & Sewell, J. (1999). Stress and burnout in rural and urban secondary school teachers. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 92, 287.
- Abelson, G. A. (1986). A factor analytic study of job satisfaction among special educators. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 46(1), 37-43.
- Angle, H., & Perry, J. (1981). An empirical assessment of organizational commitment and organizational effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26, 1-14.
- Barton, R. E. (2001, July). A policy information perspective: Facing the hard facts in education reform. *Educational Testing Service*. Retrieved from http://www.ets.org/research/pic/facing_facts.pdf 6/15/01
- Bibou-Nakou, I., Stogiannidou, A., & Kiosseoglou, G. (1999). The relation between teacher burnout and teachers' attributions and practices regarding school behaviour problems. *School Psychology International*, 20, 209-217.
- Billingsley, B. S. (2004). Special education teacher attrition and retention: A critical analysis of research literature. *The Journal of Special Education*, 38, 39-55.
- Billingsley, B. S., Carlson, E., & Klein, S. (2004). The working conditions and induction support of early career special educators. *The Journal of Exceptional Children*, 70, 333-347.

- Billingsley, B. S., & Cross, L. H. (1992). Predictors of commitment, job satisfaction, and intent to stay in teaching: A comparison of general and special educators. *The Journal of Special Education*, 25, 453-471.
- Billingsley, B. S., & Tomchin, E. M. (1992). Four beginning LD teachers: What their experiences suggest for trainers and employers. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 7, 104-112.
- Boe, E. E., Bobbitt, S. A., Cook, L. H., Barkanic, G., & Maislin, G. (1999). *Teacher turnover in eight cognate areas: National trends and predictors*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, Center for Research and Evaluation in Social Policy.
- Brownell, M. T., & Smith, S. W. (1992). Attrition/retention of special education teachers: Critique of current research and recommendations for retention efforts. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 15, 229-248.
- Brownell, M. T., Smith, S. W., & Mcnellis, J. R. (1997). Reflections on attrition in special education: Why teachers leave the classroom and where they go. *Exceptionality*, 7, 187-191.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2008). *Teachers-special education*. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos070.htm>
- Carlson, E., Braunen, M., Klein, S., Schroll, K., & Willig, S. (2002). *Study of personnel needs in special education*. Retrieved from <http://ferdig.coe.ufl.edu/spense/keyfindings.doc>

- Cegelka, P., & Doorlag, D. (1995). *Personnel preparation: Relationship to job satisfaction*. Draft Report. Working Paper #7. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Commissioners Rules of Texas. (2007).
- Crane, S. J., & Iwanicki, E. F. (1986). Perceived role conflict, role ambiguity, and burnout among special education teachers. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7, 24-31.
- Dodge, N., Keenan, S. & Lattanzi, T. (2002). Strengthening the capacity of schools and communities to serve students with serious emotional disturbance. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 11(1), 23-27.
- Dornstein, M., & Matalon, Y. (1989). A comprehensive analysis of the predictors of organizational commitment: A study of voluntary army personnel in Israel. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 34, 192-203.
- Eicheniger, J. (2000). Job stress and satisfaction among special education teachers: Effects of gender and social role orientation. *International Journal of Disability Development and Education*, 47, 397-412.
- Evans, L. (1997). Understanding teacher morale and job satisfaction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13, 831-845.
- Feidman-Nemser, S. (2003). What new teachers need to learn. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 25-29.
- Fokman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2000). Stress, positive emotion, and coping. *Current Directions in Psychology Science*, 9(4), 115-118.

- Fore, C., Martin, C. & Bender, W. N. (2002). Teacher burnout in special education: The causes and the recommended solutions. *High School Journal*, 86(1), 36-39.
- Freudenberger, J. (1977). Burnout: Occupational hazard of the childcare worker. *Child Care Quarterly*, 6, 90-98.
- Fuming, X., & Jiliang, S. (2007). Research on job satisfaction in elementary and high school teachers and strategies to increase job satisfaction. *Chinese Education and Society* 40(5), 86-96.
- Garmezy, N. & Masten, A. S. (1986). Stress, competence and resilience: Common frontiers for therapist and psychopathologist. *Behavior Therapy*, 17, 500-521.
- George, N., George, M., Gersten, R., & Grosenick, J. (1995). To leave or to stay? An exploratory study of teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Remedial and Special Education*, 16, 227-236.
- Gersten, R. M., Keating, T., Yonvanof, P. & Harniss, M. K. (2001). Working in special education: Factors that enhance special educators' intent to stay. *Exceptional Children*, 67, 549-5 71.
- Gold, Y. (1989). Reducing stress and burnout through induction programs. *Action in Teacher Education*, 11(3), 66-70.
- Gökta, Z. (2007). Job satisfaction of physical education teachers in Balıkesir. *Nigde University Physical Education and Sport Sciences Journal* 1 (1), 1-7.

- Greer, J. G., & Greer, B. B. (1992). Stopping burnout before it starts: Prevention measures at a preservice level. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 15*(3), 168-174.
- Grissmer, D. W., & Kirby, S. N. (1987). *Teacher attrition: The uphill climb to staff the nation's schools*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation.
- Haberman, M. (2005). Teacher burnout in black and white. *The New Education, 1*, 153-175.
- Hornick-Lockard, B. (2008) Minority teacher shortages. *Research Starters Education, 2*, 1-1, 16.
- Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004).
- Jennings, O. S., & Mitylene, A. (2005). A study of experienced special education teachers' perceptions of administrative support. *College Student Journal, 39*, 253-259.
- Kaufhold, Alvarez, & Arnold. (2006). Lack of school supplies, materials and resources as an elementary cause of frustration and burnout in South Texas special education teachers. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 33*(3), 159-161.
- Kavale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Louis Harris & Associates (1988). *The Metropolitan Life survey of American teachers: Strengthening the relationships between teachers and students*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.

- Macdonald, V., & Spence, D. L. (2001). Making time: A teacher's report on her first year of teaching children with emotional disabilities. *Journal of Special Education, 35*(2), 85-91.
- Mark, J. H., & Anderson, B. D. (1985). Teacher survival rates in St. Louis, 1969-1982. *American Educational Research Journal, 22*, 413-421.
- Menlove, R., Garnes, L., & Salzberg, C. (2003, March). *A qualified teacher for every student: Keeping the good ones*. American Council on Rural Special Education 23rd Annual Conference. Salt Lake City, Utah. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Miles, M. B., & Hubberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). pp.6-35. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, M. D., Brownell, M., & Smith, S. W. (1999). Factors that predict teachers staying in, leaving, or transferring from the special education classroom. *Exceptional Children, 65*, 201-218.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Revised and Expanded from *Case Study Research in Education* pp. 12-22. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Mowday, R. T., Porter, L. M., & Steers, R. M. (1982). *Employee-organization linkables: The psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Morgan, S. R., & Reinhart, J.A. (1985). Training as a factor contributing to burnout in teachers of emotionally disturbed children. *Education, 106*, 185-192.

- National Center for Educational Statistics (2003). *Representation of teachers of color in the workforce*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Clearinghouse for Professionals in Special Education. (1995). *The need for special education and related services professionals: Some projections*. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.
- Olivarez, M. M., & Arnold, M. (2006). Personal and demographic characteristics of retained teachers of special education. *Education*, 126, 702-710.
- Otto, S. J., & Arnold, M. (2005). A study of experienced special education teachers' perceptions of administrative support. *College Student Journal*, 39(2), 7-13.
- Paperwork in Special Education. (n.d.). *SPeNSE factsheet*. Retrieved from www.spense.org
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pedhazur, E. J. (1982). *Multiple regression in behavioral research*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Plash, S., & Piotrowski, C. (2006). Retention issues: A study of Alabama special education teachers. *Education*, 127, 125-127.
- Reichers, A. E. (1985). A review and re-conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Academy of Management Review*, 10, 465-476.

- Restin, L. N. (1993). Experience, meaning & principle development. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 35, 253-267.
- Rice, C. J., & Goessling, D. (2005). Recruiting and retaining male special education teachers. *Remedial & Special Education*, 26, 347-356.
- Rosenholtz, S. J. (1989). Workplace conditions that affect teacher quality and commitment: Implications for teacher induction programs. *The Elementary School Journal*, 89, 421-439.
- Schulz, I. L., & Teddlie, C. (1989). The relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and their perceptions of principals' use of power and school effectiveness. *Education*, 109, 461-468.
- Seidel, J. V. (1998). *Qualitative data analysis. 1-15*. Retrieved from <ftp://ftp.qualisresearch.com/pub/qda.pdf>
- Selye, H. (1956). *The stress of life*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- SERVE Center for Continuous Improvement at UNCG (2006). Retrieved from <http://www.w.serve.org/>
- Shreeve, W. C., Goetter, W., Norby, J. R., Griffith, G. R., Stueckle, A. F., De Michele, B....Thomas, K. (1986). Job satisfaction: The role of staff recognition. *Early Child Development and Care*, 24, 83-90.
- Singer, J. D. (1992). Are special educators' career paths special? Results from a 13-year longitudinal study. *Exceptional Children*, 59, 262-279.

- Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1988). *Conducting a qualitative research study. Understanding and conducting qualitative research*. Reston, VA. Council of Exceptional Children.
- Stempien, L. R., & Loeb, R. C. (2002). Differences in job satisfaction between general and special education teachers: Implications for retention. *Remedial and Special Education, 5*, 258-267.
- Suell, J., & Piotrowski, C. (2007). Alternative teacher education programs: A review of the literature and outcome studies. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 34*(1), 54.
- Sutton, G. W., & Huberty, T. J. (1984). An evaluation of teacher stress and job satisfaction. *Education, 105*, 189-192.
- Thorton, B., Peltier, G., & Medina, R. (2007). Reducing the special education teacher shortage. *Clearing House, 80*, 233-238.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Institute of Educational Statistics. (1998). *The condition of education* (NCES 98-013).
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2008). *The condition of education 2008* (NCES 2008-031), Indicator 31.
- Weiskopf, P. E. (1980). Burnout among teachers of exceptional children. *Exceptional Children, 47*(1), 18-23.
- Zabel, R. H., & Zabel, M. K. (2001). Revisiting burnout among special education teachers: Do age, experience, and preparation still matter? *Teacher Education and Special Education, 24*(2), 128-139.

APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What is your educational background (Years of education, certifications, etc.)?

How long have you been employed as a special education teacher?

Have all of these years been working in self contained classrooms?

Tell me some of the reason that led you to your current occupational choice.

What are some of the things that you enjoy most about your current job?

What are some of the challenges that you experience during your work day?

When you think about the things that are most difficult for you, what resources do you count on to help you to overcome these obstacles?

What roles do support staff play in this type of instructional arrangement?

What resources do you wish you had access to but do not currently have?

What are the major barriers to you obtaining the resources that you feel you need?

What role does the administration on the campus play in assisting in your current job duties?

Tell me a little about your opportunities for professional development in this district?

How important are these professional development activities to you?

How much impact does your current salary have on your decision to remain in your current teaching position?

How would you rate the current level of stress associated with your job (High, medium or low)?

How do think your current level of stress impacts your overall job performance?

What do you do to manage your stress levels?

How effective do you find your current stress-management strategies to be?

What are your occupational aspirations for the future?

Are there any other things that you wish we would have talked about that we haven't that are important issues to you regarding your job?

In education there is considerable discussion about effective ways to retain teachers in self-contained classrooms. What are your opinions regarding this issue?

Likewise, there is also a good deal of discussion on the number of teachers that vacate self-contained teaching positions. What are you perspectives on these high rates of attrition?

What other things do you wish we would have talked about that are important issues to you regarding your job?

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Script and Consent Form

Sir or Madam,

As part of my doctoral training at TWU, I am conducting research related to special education self-contained classes. This evaluation is intended for research purposes only and will not be used to alter programming in the district. As part of this study, I am required to interview staff members currently working as Life Skills, Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities and Social Adjustment Class teachers. This interview will be approximately 30 minutes in length and will be audio taped. The content of the audio tape will be reviewed by the interviewer. Transcripts of the audio tapes will be reviewed by the interviewer. Extreme care will be taken to assure confidentiality of all materials collected. Upon completion of the course project audio will be erased. The interviewer and course instructor will maintain copies of the transcripts.

By signing and returning the attached form you consent to having your voice audio-taped and transcribed for the purposes of this project. As a participant in this study you have the right to revoke consent at anytime. You also have the right to decline participation.

If you have any questions regarding participation in this study I can be contacted at (940) 369-1965 or (940) 369-2668.

Stephen Rousseau

TWU Doctoral Student

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Attrition and Retention of Special Education Self-Contained Teachers: Should I Stay or Should I Go

Investigator: Stephen A. Rousseaudjnightside@hotmail.com 940/300-9330
Advisor: Kathy DeOrnellas, PhDkdeornellas@twu.edu 940/898-2315

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Mr. Rousseau's dissertation at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this research is to determine factors that may impact upon your intent to remain in or vacate your current teaching position. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are currently employed in a self-contained special education teaching position (Ex. Social Adjustment Class, Life Skills Class or Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities.)

Description of Procedures

Prior to participating in this study, the principal investigator will review this informed consent document with you. This review will be conducted in person, prior to collecting any data from you. The consent process should take 15-20 minutes to complete. As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend one hour of your time in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The researcher will ask you questions related to your reasons for choosing your current occupation, current job stressors, resources that you access to assist in your current position and other factors that may impact upon your intent to remain in or vacate your current teaching position. The location and time of the interview will be determined via a private and collaborative conversation with you and the researcher. To assist in protecting your privacy during this research your full name will not be used during the interview process. Instead, a predetermined code name or set of initials will be used during the interview. The interview will be audio taped, and then transcribed. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age or older and be currently employed as a special education self-contained teacher.

Potential Risks

The researcher will ask you questions about your current job responsibilities and stressors associated with this position. The researcher will also ask you questions about the current resources that you access to assist in performing your duties. Questions may also focus on the resources that are currently unavailable that may positively impact upon your intent to remain in your current position. One potential risk associated with this study

includes potential discomfort associated with answering the posed questions. At any time and for any reason during the course of this interview you may take breaks. You also have the right as a participant to decline answering any or all of the questions. If you experience any discomfort during this process, please inform the researcher. A list of resources can be provided to you with the names of professionals that you may contact to discuss your discomfort related to the proposed research.

A second potential risk relates to breaches in confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. In an effort to ensure confidentiality is maintained, the following procedural safeguards will be put into place. All interviews will be conducted in private at locations that are mutually agreed upon. Your name will not be used during the interview process. A predetermined code name or coded set of initials will be used during the interview. The consent forms, tapes and the transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home. The tapes and the written transcripts will be shredded or deleted within 1 year after the study is completed. The consent forms will be turned in to the Texas Woman's University Institutional Review board when the study is completed.

The researchers will, to the best of their abilities, try and prevent problems that could arise because of this research. It is very important that you as a participant communicate any concerns or discomfort to the researchers. At that time, the researcher will attempt to assist you in resolving these issues. If the issues can't be resolved, your rights as a participant will be reviewed. It is important to note that Texas Woman's University does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The benefit of this study is to provide current and future special education self-contained teachers with information that may improve their understanding of factors related to retention and attrition.

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Signature of Participant

Date

*If you would like to know the results of this study tell us where you want them to be sent:

Email: _____

or

Address:

Appendix C
Coding Process

Hypothesis from Prospectus

Based on information obtained in the literature review, this study will have the following hypotheses:

1. It is hypothesized that increased access to paraprofessional and professional staff in both direct and indirect capacities will decrease overall levels of perceived stress and increase retention rates of highly qualified teachers.
2. It is hypothesized that increased administrative support will reduce levels of role ambiguity and increase retention rates of special education teachers.
3. It is hypothesized that salary and level of educational training will impact upon the individual's commitment to his/her current teaching position.

The following research questions, which may extend the results of the main hypotheses, will also be addressed:

In what ways, if any, does gender have an impact upon retention rates of special education teachers?

In what ways, if any, does age play a role in reducing levels of stress and effect retention rates?

In what ways, if any, does years of experience impact upon an individual's intention to remain in his/her current job?

Interview Questions Revised

What is your educational background (Years of education, certifications, etc.)?

What is the highest degree you currently hold and in what field?

How long have you been employed as a special education teacher?

Have all of these years been working in self contained classrooms?

Tell me some of the reason that led you to your current occupational choice.

How well did formalized or university instruction prepare you for your current job?

Which do you feel is more important in being a successful Self-contained teacher:
Practical or formalized experiences?

What are some of the things that you enjoy most about your current job?

What are some of the challenges that you experience during your work day?

When you think about the things that are most difficult for you, what resources do you count on to help you to overcome these obstacles?

What roles do support staff play in this type of instructional arrangement?

How important is the relationship between you and your paraprofessional staff?

What resources do you wish you had access to but do not currently have?

What are the major barriers to you obtaining the resources that you feel you need?

What are qualities associated with successful self-contained teachers?

Does lack of information or educational records on the children you serve significantly impact your ability to provide adequate service?

What role does the administration on the campus play in assisting in your current job duties?

What does an ideal campus based administration look like?

Tell me a little about your opportunities for professional development in this district?

How important are these professional development activities to you?

How can the district or school system assist you in improving your overall job performance?

How much impact does your current salary have on your decision to remain in your current teaching position?

What perceived effects or impacts do culture or age play on successfully performing your duties?

How would you rate the current level of stress associated with your job (High, medium or low)? Why?

How do think your current level of stress impacts your overall job performance?

What do you do to manage your stress levels?

How effective do you find your current stress-management strategies to be?

What are your occupational aspirations for the future?

In education there is considerable discussion about effective ways to retain teachers in self-contained classrooms. What are your opinions regarding this issue?

Likewise, there is also a good deal of discussion on the number of teachers that vacate self-contained teaching positions. What are your perspectives on these high rates of attrition?

What other things do you wish we would have talked about that are important issues to you regarding your job?

Summary of Transcripts

Participant 1

Things teachers enjoy about their jobs as an insulator:

Witnessing educational and academic progress in students. The staff experience a positive emotional reaction to students that demonstrate success.

Seeing potential in the students they work with.

Having other job opportunities available or perceptions of upward or lateral mobility.

Prior work experiences in districts that were not as supportive or unsuitable in some way.

Provides perspective and ability to compare and contrast district strengths and weaknesses.

Resources relied on to overcome obstacles to providing service or coping with stressors(Insulators)

Inherent qualities/ traits

Patience

Teachers have to want to be around children that engage in extremely challenging behaviors

They have to want to interact with children and build a relationship with them.

Teachers have to want to be around children that engage in extremely challenging behaviors

Stress reduction techniques

Breathing techniques and counting to ten to deal with stress

Take short breaks outside of the classroom

Recognition and understanding that the instructional day may be amazing or a complete disaster depending on the behaviors of the students.

Social supports

Utilize colleagues as sounding boards.

Reliance on mentors and other professional educators (Educators versus non educators as social supports)

Access to the Employee Assistance Program.

Educational supports

Calling supervisors

Reliance on the internet to obtain resources.

Reliance on the regional service center to provide ideas to help provide instruction to students.

Reliance on paraprofessionals to assist in educating students.

Provides more one on one time to students.

Expressed believe that they could not do their jobs without paraprofessional assistance.

Understanding the chain of command and ability to effectively navigate the administrative system.

Perceived levels of competence and confidence in professional abilities.

Administrators that are open and responsive to your needs (emotional or material)

Access to Professional development opportunities.

Regularly scheduled monthly meetings with other professionals teaching similar classes in the district.

Stressors (district level and building level)

Lack of formalized/standardized curriculum

Use of out of pocket moneys to buy classroom resources.

Limited funding to attend out of district in-service trainings.

Potential for physical injury

Lack of useable/useful educational records on the students.

Too many adults in the classroom/lack of adequate space

Unclear expectations related to the type of instructional setting that instruction will be provided in.

Lack of administrative support/involvement

Negative interactions with administrator

Feelings of being criticized

Feeling unappreciated

Perceptions of demeaning to paraprofessional staff. Not respecting as professionals

Mixed messages differing information from principals and assistant principals

What would an ideal administration look like:

Involved but not over involved.

Provide feedback that is constructive

Know and interact with self-contained students

Recognize the benefit of inclusion for special ed students, be an integral part of the campus life/activities.

Open door policy and available to meet and address concerns that arise.

Paraprofessionals

Teachers find benefit in para's only if they can work collaboratively with teacher

The importance of shared training opportunities to consolidate team thinking.

The importance of the relationship. Must be able to trust and be comfortable with the para's ability to provide appropriate services to students.

Important to view them as co-teachers.

Salary

Little impact on decision to remain in the position but was a factor in entering the position.

Work climate has a great impact than salary on the teachers decision to remain in position.

Views of district level administration.

Positive view of the job that the Superintendent is doing as a factor impacting entry.

Perceives that district administration is working hard to promote a positive work climate and competitive salaries.

Approachability of superintendents and assistant superintendents.

Participant 2

Insulators

Stress reduction techniques

Utilizing breathing techniques

Take breaks outside of the self-contained settings.

Crying

Just letting the days stressors go.

Try to find humor in the day's events/positive outlook

Social Supports

Having a husband that also works in the field is helpful.

????

Practical experience is more important than formalized training.

Enjoys the challenge of working with the students.

Enjoys seeing skills emerge from the students.

Working collaboratively with professionals from varying disciplines

Time and resources to provide small group direct instruction to children.

Strong relationship with Paraprofessionals and ability to work collaboratively with them.

Compassionate, hard working, and willing to learn

Willing to work with and relate to children with disabilities (Wants to work rather than needs a job)

An innate desire to want to work with students with disabilities.

Openness to learning new things.

Balance of power between teacher and student. Not trying to control students to meet some internal need of the teacher.

Open communication with district level administration (Open contact with special education director).

Occupational options ability to move into a supervisory position.

Solution focused in problem situations.

Overall desire to want to be in the position and want to work with a specific population of children.

Stressors

Student behavioral challenges

Potential for physical injury(Biting)

Lack of observable or measurable student progress

Questioning ability to provide adequate service to students.

High numbers of students in the classroom

Lack of continuity of aide support from year to year. Loss of Aides that the teacher has a strong working relationship with.

Inconsistent or lack of information from supervisors on procedural issues

Lack of district wide special education procedural guidelines.

Lack of applicable staff development.

Lack of campus administrative involvement and feedback.

Perceived inability to effectively communicate needs to supervisors/lack of supervisory responsiveness.

What would an ideal administration look like:

Special education background

Transcript notes on hypothesis questions:

Lack of educational records not viewed as a significant stressor. (Thought: Students in PPCD will not have much of an educational history to document. The impact of records is likely to be greater as a student progresses through elementary and middle and then again drops off as they enter high school). Direct work with the child provides richer more salient data.

Salary does not impact upon her decision to remain.

No perceived negative impacts of her culture or age impacting upon her ability to provide adequate service to students.

No perceived impacts of stress on job performance.

Participant 3

Insulators

Stress reduction techniques

Discuss challenges with colleagues

Lift weights/exercise

Perspective taking recognition that stress will pass(It's not the end of the world). Rational Detachment.

Positive self-talk

Feeling understood by other professionals

A willingness to accept children into your classroom even if your numbers are high.

The ability to organize and schedule effectively.

Having the benefit of seeing and working in one of the self-contained classes prior to starting a teaching position.

Social Supports

Talks to friends, aides, and family about work helps to process and generate solutions

Talking to people that are in special education and education is perceived as more beneficial in reducing stress than talking to non-educators

Mentor teachers

Student focused insulators

A desire to work with special needs children. A connection to this population.

Enjoys working directly with the students

Watching them grow academically and educationally

The ability to separate behaviors of the child with the personality of the child (Cranky kids can be endearing).

Strong relationships with classroom staff and inclusion teachers.

Ability to rely on and trust the staff to execute instruction and provide academic and behavioral support.

Creativity in motivating and disciplining children.

The ability to build and maintain a relationship with the student.

Motivated to learn, improve and overcome challenges.

Qualities of a supportive Administration

Trust in the teachers judgment

Allow the teacher the autonomy to run the class as they see fit.

Openness to discussing new ideas with the teacher.

Interact with the children in the self-contained classrooms.

Supportive in assisting with difficult parents.

Perception of the importance of collaborative teaching and interactions with paraprofessionals (Without them I would be a daycare)

District level supports(That would be helpful but are not in place)

More pay

Provide opportunities for perspective teachers to actually be in self-contained rooms prior to taking the teaching role.

Establishing a bridge type class that is a hybrid of SAC and LS

Stressors

Working with difficult parents

Parents that are not satisfied regardless of how much progress that their child made

Disinterest of parents in their child's education/lack of responsiveness

Parents not responding to or returning necessary paperwork.

Paperwork/legal requirements

Constantly changing laws and requirements

Takes away for instructional time.

Administrative stressors

Lack of involvement

Inadequate or ineffective disciplinary contingencies for students.

District level administration:

Failing to provide adequate notice related to new certifications or credentials that are being required.

Failure to communicate effectively.

Perceived lack of acknowledgment of how difficult the job is in lieu of the population.

Last minute requests in the middle of the school year for information.

Repetition of in-service trainings. No new information.

Excessive documentation for the TAKS-ALT

Student Stressors

Not wanting to work/behavioral

Bad moods

Having to cope with not providing adequate service to the class when one child has a bad day and needs all my attention.

Feeling responsible for making sure everything is done to the letter of the law/IeP

Staff Stressors

Staff in a bad mood

Staff not wanting to work

Educational support stress

Lack of standardized program or curriculum for LS students

Provision of campus level in-services that do not apply to the students in this setting.

District level in-service emphasis on state level assessments that don't really measure anything of value.

A dearth of training opportunities that focus on real problems and potential solutions for working with problem behaviors.

Lack of understanding at the district level that problems in LS are not the same as SAC, ALS etc. Need for training specific to their setting.

Failure to communicate which training may or may not be available.

Limited availability of practical strategy type trainings.

State assessments

Dollar allotment per student is too low. Not enough money to send all self-contained students to summer school.

More stringent requirements to get kids into summer programs.

Having to use own funds to purchase consumables.

Transcription notes

Thinks the salary is very good but would still do the job if he was independently wealthy.

Stress levels High at the beginning and middle of the year and low at the end of the year.

Occupational aspirations to be content with teaching.

Paperwork is difficult but not viewed as a stressor.

Opinion change: Initially thought the position would be easy but realized as time went on how difficult it really was.

Lack of educational records are viewed as an inconvenience but not a significant stressors. The most salient information comes from working directly with the student.

Subject 4

High school life skills

Insulators

Stress reduction techniques:

Swimming, biking, watching TV and being with friends, happy hours to wind down.

Teacher perceptions of students

Drawn to helping profession because of community involvement with special needs individuals.

Sense of fulfillment in working with sped children.

Confidence in one's ability to be a good teacher.

Importance of previous experience working in self-contained classes as a para.

Perspective on how the class works.

Educational supports

Reliance on paraprofessionals to assist in content areas that are viewed as weak by the teacher.

Para's also help with the behavioral management of the classroom

The relationship with paras is viewed as crucial.

Staffings with other professionals to prepare for difficult meetings.

Stress reduction techniques

Social Supports

Reliance on a mentor teacher. With decreasing reliance as more experience is gained.

Communicating with friends regarding problems that she is experiencing in the classroom.

Time with friends and husband were deemed as paramount in dealing with stressors of the job.

Student focused insulators

Seeing the children gain mastery of taught skills.

Qualities of a supportive Administration

District supports in place

Opportunities for in-service training

Feeling that the district wants you to be successful

District level supports (That would be helpful but are not in place)

A standardized curriculum across the district for the Life Skills classrooms.

Standardized set of materials that would be in all classes.

Stressors

Lack of educational materials

Listed as a significant stressors. Materials don't match up with needs of students.

Working with difficult parents

Extended ARD meetings and dealing with parents that are dissatisfied with student progress.

Mixed messages from campus based and district level administration (Special ed said I was doing a good job, my administrator said I needed more help.)

Individuals are unprepared for what they are getting into. They need to be fully informed about the position prior to taking the job.

Paperwork/legal requirements

Listed as a challenge and felt underprepared to deal with this aspect of the job.

Organizational skills were viewed as an area of deficit/challenge.

Worries about litigation

Too much paperwork

Administrative stressors

Not feeling supported

Lack of responsiveness to requests are needs

Poor communication

Feelings of diminished credibility and opinions not viewed as valuable.

Having to meet minimum requirements to be fully certified. Principal has to sign off after a year of probationary service.

Feeling judged

Student Stressors

Managing the children's behavior

District level administration:

Difficulty navigating the system to get appropriate materials and supplies.

Ambiguity in knowing what special ed supervisor or staff is responsible for what

Ambiguity in knowing if things are being done correctly/lack of feedback

Limited training on the tools that they are to use in their jobs (Class/Bridge)

Lack of Special education basics training for new teachers.

Staff Stressors

Difficulty communicating needs and delineating responsibilities to paras.

Underprepared for weekly staff meetings.

Educational support stress

Transcription notes

Practical experience is viewed as more important than formalized training.

Interesting that individuals that are not pursuing higher level degrees believe that practical is more important. Those pursuing higher ed degrees feel it's more of a blending of the two (Practical and formalized)

Qualities associated with an effective self-contained teacher. Patience and organization

Lack of educational records are not deemed to be a significant stressor. Direct work with the student provides better information.

Staff development is viewed as important. Greater focus should be played on providing practical strategies that could be implemented in the classrooms.

Currently the staff development activities don't necessarily apply to them.

Salary does not significantly impact upon her decision to remain in the position.

Perception that she will not remain in the position because of the high levels of stress.

Would like to pursue a master's degree in library science.

Participant 5

High School SAC

Insulators

Ability to take a linear/analytic approach to dealing with behavioral challenges

Separates behavior from the child. Depersonalize

Formalized training did assist in providing the discipline necessary to do the job.

Practical experience gives you the skills necessary to have longevity in the field.

Ability to disconnect at the end of the day.

Shared beliefs and goals of all staff working with the students.

Reliance on personal skill-set, paraprofessional staff, district staff and administration.

Continuity of paraprofessional assistance. Predictability and dependability of staff.

Maintaining continuity of instructional service to students.

Recognition that stress is a part of the job and you are here for the students.

Stress management via exercise

Stability in the home setting and predictability of home life.

Having people that you can talk to and that understand what you are going through.

Rational detachment, not taking things personally.

Let the data guide your decision making.

Stressors:

Working with the challenging behaviors of the students

Lack of ability to control all the variables that create problem behaviors.

Inability to inoculate children against the negative influences of the non-school settings.

Trying to safely integrate students into the mainstream settings

Difficulty building relationships with regular education staff

Getting regular education staff to accept and take ownership of special needs students

Managing students in crisis.

Lack of relevant staff development

Trying to navigate the system so that children can get the credits they need to graduate.

The challenge of supporting/teach 5 or more subjects across multiple grade levels.

Transcription notes

Entry into the field from the business world. Wanted to do something productive as opposed to contribute to the bottom line of a corporation. Didn't want to be on the road.

Wanted to help to make a positive impact on the lives of children. Interest in learning about Autism

Interesting in the Why's or roots of behavior.

Drawn to the unpredictability of the job

The importance of patience in dealing with students, thoroughness and intuition.

Ideal administration should care about children and have a foundation knowledge about special education.

Secondary teachers have more of a focus on stress associated with teaching multiple courses across grade levels. May associate to the increasing levels of specialization in the curriculum as the students progress from elementary to secondary settings.

Mild perception of the importance of salary on decision to stay in the position.

Acceptance of culture gap in regards to age.

Aspirations to be in administration: occupational options are present. The very thing that may keep the staff from burning out is the very thing that may make them vacate the position. They have options???

Teachers leave because they were not a right fit for the job to begin with and they lacked the discipline necessary to function effectively in the position.

Participant 6

Middle School SAC

Entry into position

Got alternatively certified and was searching for special education jobs.

Connection to the student population.

Insulators:

Enjoys the amount of one on one time that can be spent with students

The ability to provide a more rounded education to students that meet both academic, social and psychological needs.

Perspective that psychosocial needs must be met prior to children being ready and able to learn academic content.

Perspective that the job is challenging

The ability to not let the behaviors of the students upset you. Rational detachment (Unruffleable).

Even when the students exit the class there is a high need to stay attached to the students and check on their progress.

An understanding that physical aggression is a part of the job and you have to have enough control to not react or make a big deal out of the behavior (That stapler being thrown at you is not about you.)

Having a plan and trusting your instincts related to handle crisis situations.

Establishing a strong relationship between the student and teacher is paramount.

Take time to get to know the students and foster a climate of mutual respect.

Recognizing the importance of getting to know students and allowing them to be a part of the decision making process of classroom rules.

Understanding the importance of practicing classroom procedures.

Culture can impact on your ability to relate, but recognizing that can assist in reaching out to students to meet them where they are.

Age as an insulator in that teacher and student may have some similar social interests to their students. They may have seen some of the same movies, heard some of the same songs and understand age related social references.

Reliance on the para's to assist in communicating with students, de-escalating students and promoting a positive climate in the classroom.

The ability to organize and plan for completion of paperwork.

The ability of staff to stay emotionally invested in the job.

Administrators have provided assistance in de-escalating upset parents but are not overly involved in the classroom process.

Seeing the students make academic and behavioral progress over the course of the year.

Accepting stress as a natural part of the job and recognizing that it comes out of your compassion and caring for students.

Perceiving your job as contributing to the greater good of society.

Campus supports that are not in place that would be beneficial:

A good administration should be aware of the students in the class, their disabilities and the supports they require to be successful.

Recognize the emotional stress that is placed on sped teachers.

Advocate for the teachers and assist in de-escalating angry/upset parents

An administration that is not over-involved but not hands off.

Open communication related to student and staff needs.

Opportunities to educate staff on the needs of special education students and teachers.

District supports that are not in place that would be beneficial:

A complete set of lesson plans based on a standardized special ed curriculum.

Opportunities for Self-contained staff to dialogue regarding their jobs.

More practical strategies for educating students with emotional and behavioral challenges during in-service meetings.

Stressors

Inability of regular education staff to relate to the stress of self-contained teachers jobs.

Feelings of isolation.

The emotional drain of upset parents and students.

Difficulty disconnecting from the stress of the jobs and perseverating on student needs when outside of the school setting.

Even when the students exit the class there is a high need to stay attached to the students and check on their progress.

Establishing guidelines, protocols and procedures for the para's to follow to facilitate a positive climate in the classroom.

Too high of a staff to student ratio

Too low a student to staff ratio

Being placed in a managerial role over the staff in the classroom. (It can be intimidating if you haven't had experience with this aspect of the profession).

A new teacher having to work with para's that have been entrenched in a classroom for years.

Personal safety

The job demands that you have the ability to multitask (grading papers, therapeutic conversation, providing lessons, etc.)

Lack of ownership of special needs students by regular education teacher during inclusion times and beyond.

Educational stressors

Curriculum, cooperation and collaboration with general education professionals and paperwork.

Lack of lesson plans for the students/no standardized curriculum.

Limited access to parallel materials that are being utilized in the general education classes (Powerpoints, lessons, etc.)

Lack of open communication regarding lessons and how sped students will be integrated or have access to general education materials and support.

Having to prep lessons for 5 classes over 3 grade levels

Lack of appropriate/relevant staff development. The use of the track method of in-service where all you get is indepth knowledge on one subject.

Incomplete records and paperwork are a stressor, but organizational skills and a desire to do things the right way moderate the stress associated with this factor.

Transcription notes

Being aware of probability that extreme behaviors or going to occur is an consistent insulator across subjects and a source of stress if it was not perceived as a potential part of the job.

Practical experience viewed as more important. Formalized training provides you with the best practice methods of how to handle things but instinct is more valuable in crisis situations.

Salary is not viewed as a major impact on the participants decision to remain in the position.

Age is looked at as a benefit: Younger teachers may focus more on their ability to relate in terms of having some similar social interests to their students. They may have seen some of the same movies, heard some of the same songs and understand age related social references.

The reason why self-contained teachers leave is because they were initially unprepared for the demands of the job and did not receive the support they needed to be effective in the position.

The participant perceives her stress levels as high to medium. Also verbalized that it could not ever be less than medium. It is not viewed as a significant impact on job performance.

This participant did discuss occupational aspirations for the future outside of the school setting, but is not ready to contemplate an immediate change in profession. She wants to stay in the trenches and can't see herself in an office outside of the classroom.

Districts should not try to retain teachers that are already burnt out.

It's important to fully inform professionals about the nature and scope of the job prior to accepting them to the position.

Participant 7

Insulators

Working as a team to educate students with special needs.

Perception that the job can make a positive difference in the lives of children and families.

Reliance on para-professionals and support staff for emotional and practical supports.

Trust in your teams ability to fulfill the academic and behavioral needs of student.

Supportive administration that can step in and work with students as needed, lead gently (Encouraging), be supportive to staff. If things are working don't micromanage.

Seeing students be successful

The ability to build and maintain positive relationships with team members and students.

Stress reduction techniques

Sit in a quiet spot at home

Play with my dog

Have a glass of wine

Talk to my husband

And laugh and cry

Campus and district supports that are not available but that would be beneficial:

A shower, washer and dryer

A full time Licensed Specialist in School Psychology

More opportunities to staff with other teachers in the SAC position.

Clerk to help with the paperwork

Stressors

Being able to identify what techniques or strategies will be effective in changing challenging behaviors.

Feeling disconnected and isolated from regular education staff(Can't be forthright about what we do).

Physical and mental demands of the job.

Lack of positive adult role models for the students to interact with.

Lack of tangible reinforcers or consumables rewards for the students.

Barriers to students learning related to administrative changes in the way that service is going to be provided to students (Re-allocation of resources).

Assuring that staff have a balance between professional practice and humor.

Excessive amounts of paperwork and liability associated with failing to do it completely and correctly.

Non-supportive parents

Having to involve CPS or police

Inability to control the factors in the home settings that may be contributing to the students behavioral issues.

Lack of continuity between home and school on dealing effectively with the child's issues.

Transcription notes

Practical experience is viewed as more beneficial in dealing effectively with students.

Entry into the profession because of fascination with low incidence disorders such as autism.

Substitute taught in the social adjustment class prior to taking the teaching position.

Could not meet the demands of the position without the support of classroom aides.

Barriers to getting the things that are needed: Time, money and a shortage of people who understand the nature and scope of their student's disabilities.

Staff development is abundant but not necessarily ideal. Would like staff development that is outside the narrow scope of special education.

Salary doesn't significantly impact upon the teacher's decision to remain in the position.

Stress levels are viewed as high.

Stress impacts on the teacher's overall level of patience.

Although missing paperwork can be a problem. It is not viewed as a significant stressor.

The most salient data comes from working with the student and getting to know their needs.

Participant 8

PPCD

Insulators

The ability to stay calm in crisis situations

Stress reduction techniques: Try to disconnect during the weekends, spend time with friends, sleeping in on Saturdays. Social supports, church, family, friends.' It is viewed as more helpful to talk to other professionals in the field rather than people that are outside the field of special education.

University training helped to develop the participants ability to organize and follow through on things. It also instilled the importance of researching new and effective ways to educate students.

Recognition that educating challenging students is a stepwise process and has to be approached in an slow and incremental fashion.

Seeing kids grow and develop academically, socially and emotionally.

Reliance on other special education professionals to assist in explaining paperwork

Utilizing research, taking classes, books, talking to parents and the internet to find information that can improve performance.

Sound relationship between para's and teachers and fundamental trust.

Para's stepping in to assist with students when paperwork becomes overwhelming.

The importance of developing a community and positive learning environment with the para's. Common goals.

Qualities of an effective self-contained teacher: A passion to work with children and persistence

Acceptance of children for who they are.

Administrative support: Administrators provide support in ARD meetings and providing guidance on legal matters. Dealing with difficult parents.

District or building level resources that are currently not available that would be viewed as beneficial

More technology, inservices on how to utilize the technology and improved communication with the district administration.

An ideal campus administration is encouraging, involved and predictable

More staff to reduce the numbers of students per teacher in the classes.

Stressors

Behavioral challenges: Defiance and outbursts.

Paperwork is also a significant stressor takes away from the amount of time that can be spent with the students.

Legal requirements are an area of concern

Dealing with difficult parents

Being the first individual to tell a parent that their child has a disability.

Effectively education students of differing disabilities.

Lack of effective communication with district staff.

Lack of educational records was viewed as a significant stressor.

Last minute special education meetings that appear unorganized and an inefficient use of the teachers time.

Lack of notice that meetings will be held.

Lack of communication, caseloads and differing opinions on how to proceed.

Transcription notes

Entry based on a love for children and encouraged by mother as an educator to be a teacher. Encouraged by family friends that had special needs students to go into the field of special education.

Effective teachers balance formalized training and practical experiences.

Para's are viewed as instrumental in effectively running the program and adequately educating students.

As the teacher realized the amount of time that was needed to effectively obtain needed documentation she requested records earlier the following year.

Professional development is abundant but needs more focus on the real needs of the staff: Technology and program training.

Salary effected the participants decision to come to this district but is not viewed as a factor in retention.

Impacts of age and culture

Age impacts stamina you have to be able to keep up with the children.

Impacts of culture. The participant is aware that it has an impact but feels as if she could effectively navigate cultural differences.

Occupational aspirations is to be an assistant principal. However, wants to remain in the PPCD position for at least 5-10 years.

Teachers leave when they feel overwhelmed and unsupported.

General conceptualizations after first read through of transcripts

Appears that most teachers did not initially intend to take the self contained teaching position.

They were looking for jobs and that was the only one available.

Started as aides and moved to teaching position.

Campus administration is crucial. They need to know the children, help with inclusion and provide support in dealing with difficult parents.

General Code Ideas

What do you enjoy?

Break down into kids, challenges, seeing educational progress, feelings of making a difference, administrative appreciation.

What are stressors

Social emotional, developmental focus versus Academic focus is there a difference in perception and burnout rates?

Awareness of difficulty disconnecting emotionally from the students at the end of the day.

Fostering a relationship with students.

(Children expose their emotions much more readily in special needs classes)

Level of perceived connectedness with the students

Personal characteristics of teachers versus experience and training.

Perceived ability to project rational detachment.

Instinct versus practical or formalized knowledge.

Flexibility in teaching style versus pre-established norms.

Awareness of potential cultural effects versus low awareness

Age as it applies to relating to students and establishing rapport

Younger staff appeared to focus on their coolness versus older staff focusing on providing their experiences to guide the students.

Leadership styles in the class: Directing, teaching, coaching paraprofessionals.

Conceptualization of role responsibilities of paraprofessionals

How are they viewed: Equals or Subordinates

Ability to delegate. If the child likes the para more than you then let them help the child.

No ego in education

Qualities of a good Self contained teacher as it applies to managing paraprofessionals.

Collaboration with general education teachers.

Administration needs to set up collaborative teams that meet regularly to discuss curriculum planning with sped.

Lack of carryover of general education curriculum in the sped classes. Lesson plans are not shared.

General ed teaching for the many

Special education teaching for the one!

Administration:

Do they understand the emotional impact of the job of self-contained teachers.

Recognition of a job that is above and beyond.

Administrative style: understanding/rigid. Sympathized with

Salary may impact entry but not likely to impact decision to stay.

Building relationships with teachers and communication

Participants stating that the position was the only one available for which they could be employed or to get a year of teaching experience to meet requirements of full certification versus probationary alternative cert route

Social supports appears to be the consistent variable in insulating teachers from the stressors of the job.

Depersonalize behaviors from the child.

Admitting the stressors and venting opportunities.

Coding revised

Classroom/individual Level Insulators to Stress which may impact upon
resiliency/retention:

Culture and Age as an Insulator (CAI)

Associated Question: What perceived effects or impacts do culture or age play on
successfully performing your duties?

Ex. Staff perceive the closeness or distance of their age or cultural background as a benefit to relating to and establishing a connection with the student.

Performance Successes (PS)

Associated Question: What are some of the things that you enjoy most about your current job?

Ex. Witnessing Educational progress (Academic, social or emotional)

Positive qualities or characteristics of teachers (PQT)

Associated Interview Question: What are qualities associated with successful self-contained teachers?

Associated Interview Question: In education there is considerable discussion about effective ways to retain teachers in self-contained classrooms. What are your opinions regarding this issue?

Ex. Patient teachers and teachers that maintain a sense of rational detachment, ability to organize and schedule, exposure to the setting prior to taking the job. Enjoys a challenge. Understanding that psychosocial needs must be met prior to students being ready to learn. Takes time to get to know the students

Positive Perceptual bias (PPB)

Associated Question: Tell me some of the reason that led you to your current occupational choice.

Ex. Perceiving the educational and social potential of the students they work with.

Previous positive community involvement with special needs students leading to sense of fulfillment working with this population. Perceives the job as contributing to the greater good of society. Fascination with low incidence disorders.

What do you do to manage your stress levels?

Implementation of Stress Reduction Techniques (SRT)

Ex. Breathing techniques, short breaks, drinking, crying, use of humor, trying to just let things go, exercise, recognition that stress will pass, positive self talk.

Access to Social Supports (ATSS)

Ex. Reliance on Mentors, family friends, church and other professionals

Question: When you think about the things that are most difficult for you, what resources do you count on to help you to overcome these obstacles?

Access to Educational Supports (ATES)

Associated Question What role does the administration on the campus play in assisting in your current job duties?

Associated Question: What does an ideal campus based administration look like?

Associated Question: Which do you feel is more important in being a successful Self-contained teacher: Practical or formalized experiences?

Ex. Calling Supervisors, reliance on internet for resources, regional service centers for professional development, paraprofessional assistance. Reliance on previous training university and practical experiences.

Administrative Support-Positive (ASP)

Associated Question: What role does the administration on the campus play in assisting in your current job duties?

Associated Question: What does an ideal campus based administration look like?

Ex. Administrators are open and clear communication, responsive and supportive to emotional, physical and tangible needs. Know the students, the challenges of self-contained classes and assist with difficult parents.

Occupational Aspirations/Upward mobility (OAUM)

Associated Question: What are your occupational aspirations for the future? (Teachers with master's degrees and administrative certifications tended to have a goal of eventually moving out of the classroom settings)

Ex. Staff report a consolidated interest in taking a supervisory or administrative position in the next 5-10 years. Feelings of having options beyond that of the classroom teaching position appeared to moderate ability to manage stress.)

Para Professional Support as an Insulator (PPSI)

Associated Question: When you think about the things that are most difficult for you, what resources do you count on to help you to overcome these obstacles?

Associated Question: What roles do support staff play in this type of instructional arrangement?

Associated Question: How important is the relationship between you and your paraprofessional staff?

Ex. Demonstrates compassion for the students, willing to learn and can relate to the children. Not in the position just because they need a job. Works collaboratively with teacher. Good balance of power between staff and teacher. Assisting in instruction and behavior management.

Stressors

Culture and Age as Stressors (CAS)

Associated Question: What perceived effects or impacts do culture or age play on successfully performing your duties?

Ex. Staff perceive the closeness or distance of their age or cultural background as an impediment to relating to and establishing a connection with the student.

Lack of Performance Successes (PS)

Associated Question: What are some of the challenges that you experience during your work day?

Ex. Even in the presence of significant intervention behavioral and academic challenges persist. Teacher's competence and confidence is challenged.

Qualities or characteristics of teachers who burnout (QTB)

Associated Question: Likewise, there is also a good deal of discussion on the number of teachers that vacate self-contained teaching positions. What are your perspectives on these high rates of attrition?

Associated Question: What are some of the challenges that you experience during your work day?

Ex. These are qualities reported by the teacher to lead to higher levels of perceived stress:

Inability to disconnect or compartmentalize from the job, worrying about variables that are out of their control: I.e. What is occurring in the home setting that may be leading to the current behaviors. Feeling of inability to successfully change or intervene with a child. Lack of perceived ability to make educational or social progress with the student. Lack of confidence and competence. (This may fit best in negative perceptual bias category???)

Negative Perceptual bias (PPB)

Associated Question: How would you rate the current level of stress associated with your job (High, medium or low)? Why? How do you think your current level of stress impacts your overall job performance?

Associated Question: What do you do to manage your stress levels?

Associated Question: How effective do you find your current stress-management strategies to be?

Ex. Feelings unable to make progress with the student, inability to control behavioral variables and setting events for students, inability to express competence in ones

professional life, feelings that they are being set up for failure, feelings that the true nature of the job was not adequately described to them. (Learned helplessness)

Ineffective Stress Reduction Techniques (ISRT)

Associated Question: How effective do you find your current stress-management strategies to be?

Associated Question: How would you rate the current level of stress associated with your job (High, medium or low)? Why?

Associated Questions: How do think your current level of stress impacts your overall job performance?

Associated Questions: What do you do to manage your stress levels?

Ex. No identified stress reduction strategies or verbalization that stress reduction strategies are ineffective or inadequate.

Lack of Social Supports/Isolation (LSSI)

Associated Questions: How can the district or school system assist you in improving your overall job performance?

Ex. Special education teachers feel misunderstood or isolated from other non-special ed staff and administrators

Lack of Educational Supports or Consistency in Support (ATES)

Associated Questions: How can the district or school system assist you in improving your overall job performance?

Associated Question: Does lack of information or educational records on the children you serve significantly impact your ability to provide adequate service?

Associated Questions: What resources do you wish you had access to but do not currently have?

Associated Questions: What are the major barriers to you obtaining the resources that you feel you need?

Ex. Lack of cohesions in the inclusion process. Regular education and special education teachers work in parallel rather than collaboratively. Educational materials are not provided to the staff and students that are part of the education of all students in regular ed (Books, handouts, powerpoints, notes, lesson plans etc.) More stringent requirements for students accessing programs. Inappropriateness of state assessments. Limited training options for salient problems teachers are experiencing. Having to spend their personal money for consumables.

Administrative Support-Negative (ASP)

Associated Questions: What role does the administration on the campus play in assisting in your current job duties?

Associated Questions: What does an ideal campus based administration look like?

Ex. Receiving inconsistent or no information or advice from supervisors or administrators on legal, ethical or practical matters. Poor communication, feeling mistrusted and demoralized. Being over involved in the day to day running of the classroom, lack of

constructive feedback and fails to work to include special needs students in the general education setting. Inadequate or ineffective discipline contingencies.

Paraprofessionals as a Source of Stress (PPS)

Associated Question: How important is the relationship between you and your paraprofessional staff?

Ex. Lack of a shared vision for the classroom model/difficulty working collaboratively,

Paraprofessionals that have been in the classroom longer than the teacher/power differential/credibility issues, teacher takes on the role of a manager, difficulty effectively allocating this human resource. Personality conflicts.

Potential for Physical Injury (PFPI)

Associated Questions: What are some of the challenges that you experience during your work day?

Ex. Teachers having to deal with students who engage in assaultive and aggressive behaviors.

Working with Difficult Parents (WWDP)

Associated Questions: What are some of the challenges that you experience during your work day?

Ex. Having to communicate with parents that are unhappy with their child's educational progress, grieving because they have just discovered they have a disability or are otherwise unhappy with the communication between teacher and themselves)

Lack of District Level Guidelines/Procedures(LDLG)

Associated question: How can the district or school system assist you in improving your overall job performance?

Ex. Lack of standardized procedures and protocols for dealing with legal, ethical and practical challenges. (Could also be administrative stressors???)

District Support Negative (DSN)

Associated question: Tell me a little about your opportunities for professional development in this district?

Associated question: How important are these professional development activities to you?

Associated question: How can the district or school system assist you in improving your overall job performance?

Ex. No formal opportunities to staff with other professionals in the district that work in similar positions. Lack of relevant staff development activities

Paperwork and Legal Requirement Stress (PLRS)

Associated question: What are some of the challenges that you experience during your work day?

Ex. Staff indicate that paperwork is overwhelming, a hassle, fear legal reprisal for failing to meet standards, frustration related to the fact that paperwork takes time away from the students. Extended ARD meetings. Having to contact CPS or police

APPENDIX D

Codebook

ATTRITION AND RETENTION CONTENT ANALYSIS

CATEGORIES for CODING ABSTRACTS

<u>Code</u>	<u>Insulators</u> <u>Definition or Rule</u>
Culture and Age as an Insulator (CAI)	Culture or age as an insulator is endorsed if staff perceived the closeness or distance of their age or cultural background as a benefit to relating to and establishing a connection with the student.
Performance Successes (PS)	This code relates to a participant experiencing educational progress (Academic, social or emotional) for their students. It relates to those "ah ha moments" Specifically, it refers to when the teacher indicates a positive emotional reaction to academic, social/emotional gains of a student.
Increased time with Student(ITS)	This code is utilized when a participant indicates that the increased staff to student ratio provides educational or behavior benefit to students. Increased time working with the student elicits a positive emotional reaction from the teacher.
Positive qualities or characteristics of teachers (PQT)	This category includes statements made by the interview in relation to qualities that define resilient and successful teachers. Generally, a positive outlook on how to successfully intervene with students or an inherent trait or characteristic that assists the teacher in performing her duties (Ex. Patient teachers and teachers that maintain a sense of rational detachment, ability to organize and schedule, exposure to the setting prior to taking the job. Enjoys a challenge. Understanding that psychosocial needs must be met prior to students being ready to learn, Never stop trying, learning or researching.
Implementation of Stress Reduction Techniques (SRT)	Stress management techniques that are utilized by staff to cope with the pressures of the job.
Access to Social Supports (ATSS)	This code can be used when the participant reports interacting with others outside of school as a tool for gaining clarity regarding a situation, seeking advice to resolve a challenging situation at work or to otherwise talk through and solicit advice regarding day to day work challenges (Professional and Non-Professionals).
Parent Support positive (PSP)	Productive involvement and interactions with parents. Interactions that result in enhanced trust and confidence in the teachers ability to make positive change with the student.
Access to Educational Supports (ATES)	This code is utilized when the interviewee describes accessing or interacting with other professionals in and out of the district to assist in dealing effectively with or resolving challenging situations. Calling Supervisors, reliance on internet for resources, regional service centers for professional development, administration, paraprofessional assistance. Reliance on previous training university and practical experiences.
Updated 12/09/10	

<i>-Access to Educational Support-Individual (ATES-I)</i>	Readily available access or support from teachers, mentors or relationships with previous university teachers or advisors.
<i>-Access to Educational Support-Material supplies (ATES-MS)</i>	Readily available access to classroom materials, books, handouts, curriculum materials
<i>-Access to Educational Support-Campus (ATES-C)</i>	Reliance on campus administrators and support staff personnel to assist with challenging behaviors or provide academic or behavior support.
<i>Access to Educational Support Supervisors (ATES-S)</i>	Contact with district level supervisors or personnel to assist in resolving issues. District level staff are perceived as approachable in addressing concerns.
<i>Access to Educational Support Technology (ATES-Tech)</i>	Utilization of district technology resources to assist in the performance of one's duties.
<i>Access to Educational Support Training(ATES-Tr)</i>	Campus based or regional service centers for relevant/useful professional development activities.
Salary Positive (SAL-P)	This code is utilized when the participants indicates that salary is an incentive or inducement to remain in the position.
Salary Neutral (SAL-N)	This code is utilized when participants indicated satisfaction with salary, but that salary had no impact on their decision to remain in their current position.
Salary Entry (SAL- E)	This code is utilized if participants indicate that salary was an inducement to enter the position but is not the primary reason they remain in the position.
Salary Negative (SAL-NEG)	When a participant indicates dissatisfaction with current salary or a desire for more money for the position in which they work (Ex. More money would be cool, we should get an additional stipened, etc.)
Updated 12/09/10	

Occupational Aspiration:

*-Occupational Aspirations
/Upward mobility positive
(OA-P)+*

This code relates to the participants intent to remain in or vacate their current position.

*-Occupational Aspirations
/Upward mobility negative
(OA-N)*

Interviewee's describe occupational plans for the future including moving to a supervisory position, administrative or other non-classroom based setting.

Interviewee's describe contentment with current job and has no plans to move out of the classroom based setting. Ex. Can't see myself in another position.

*-Occupation Aspiration
Lateral, neutral(OA-L)*

Indication of a position in the educational field that is instructional in nature such as general education.

*-Occupational Aspiration
exit the field(OA-E)*

The participants indicate that they have a desire to leave the field of education.

**Para Professional Support
as an Insulator (PPSI)**

This code is used when the interviewee describes positive attributes or attitudes toward the paraprofessional staff. Ex. The paraprofessional demonstrates compassion for the students, willing to learn and can relate to the children. Not in the position just because they need a job. Works collaboratively with teacher. Good balance of power between staff and teacher. Assisting in instruction and behavior management.

Experience EX

This code relates to the impact of personal, educational and job experiences which impact upon the interviewee's perception of their current position. Use this code when blended experiences are prominent (Personal, University, Job). It can also relate to hands on training as being beneficial.

-EX personal (EX-P)

How the individuals personal experiences with individuals with disabilities may have impacted upon their decision to enter into or remain in their current position.

EX University (EX-U)

The impact that formalized educational training or certifications may have had on their decision to enter into or remain in their current position.

EX- Job (EX-J)

The impact of previous job experiences that may have impacted upon their decision to enter into or remain in their current position. This can be positively or negatively. (Ex. They hated their previous job and began looking for a new position in special education.

Updated 12/09/10

Stressor Codes

Culture and Age as a Stressors (CAS)	Staff perceives the closeness or distance of their age or cultural background as an impediment to relating to and establishing a connection with the student. Verbalizing a disconnect from the student due to the difference or closeness in age.
Qualities/characteristics Of ineffective teachers (QTB)	These are qualities reported by the teacher to lead to higher levels of perceived stress: Inability to disconnect or compartmentalize from the job, won't ask for help, worrying about variables that are out of their control: i.e. What is occurring in the home setting that may be leading to the current behaviors.
Performance Failures (PF)	This code is used when the teacher reports lack of perceived ability to make educational or social progress with the student. The teachers question their professional competence. Confidence is shaken and they express feelings of inability to successfully change or intervene with a child.
Ineffective Stress Reduction Techniques (ISRT)	This code is used when the participants fail to identify useful stress management techniques or a limited understanding of the impacts of stress on their performance.
Lack of Social Supports /Isolation (LSSI-C)	The code should be utilized when staff report a general disconnection from other teachers or staff that are on their campus. Ex. I feel as if other teachers don't take ownership or acknowledge that they are responsible for teaching my students too. I don't get invited or scheduled for campus events or functions.
Lack of Social Supports /Isolation (LSSI-D)	The code should be utilized when staff report a general disconnection or lack of involvement of district level staff or supervisors. Ex. My supervisors never comes into my classroom. I'm just on my own. Sometimes they don't even respond to my emails.
Lack of Social Supports /Isolation (LSSI-I)	The code should be utilized when staff report a general disconnection or lack of support from family and friends outside of the school system. Ex. My friends can't even begin to understand the things that I deal with during the school day.
Updated 12/09/10	

**Lack of Educational Supports
or Consistency in Support(LES)**

This code is utilized when participants report a general lack of consistency or support in providing educational services to students. Difficulty getting students into the programs they need. Staff are required to use assessments that are not relevant or appropriate for students. Staff report having to spend their personal money for consumables.

**-Lack of Educational Supports
Materials and Supplies(LES-MS)**

Interviewee reports that they do not have the materials and supplies necessary to successfully complete their job (Books, handouts, manipulatives, software, etc.)

**-Lack of Educational Supports
Collaboration
(LES-C)**

This code is utilized when stress regarding the inclusion process is indicated. It can include difficulty collaborating effectively with regular education teachers. Lack of cohesions in the inclusion process. Regular education and special education teachers work in parallel rather than collaboratively. Educational materials are supplied by regular ed (Books, handouts, powerpoints, notes, lesson plans etc.)

**-Lack of Educational Supports/
Relevant Training(LES-T)**

Utilized when the staff member indicates frustration regarding the type, quantity or quality of available training opportunities. Limited training options for salient problems teachers are experiencing. Report being underprepared for the assigned job duties.

**-Lack of Educational Supports/
Staff to student ratio(LES-SSR)**

This code is used when participants indicate stress associated with too many students in the classroom or too many adults in a limited space.

**-Lack of Educational Supports/
Curriculum(LES-CUR)**

This code is utilized when participants report that a lack of a standardized or cohesive curriculum interferes with provision of services.

**Lack of Educational
Records or history on Student
(LER)**

This code is utilized when participants report that lack of educational records or history interferes with their ability to adequately educate the student.

**Administrative Support-
Negative (ASN)**

This code should be used when the participant specifically refers to a negative or unproductive communication between themselves and an administrator. For example: Receiving inconsistent or no information or advice from supervisors or administrators on legal, ethical or practical matters. Poor communication, feeling mistrusted and demoralized. Being over involved in the day to day running of the classroom, lack of constructive feedback and fails to work to include special needs students in the general education setting. Inadequate or ineffective discipline contingencies.

Updated 12/09/10

**Paraprofessionals as a
Source of Stress (PPS)**

This code reflects upon a lack of a shared vision for the classroom model/difficulty working collaboratively. It should also be used to denote power differentials between the paraprofessionals and teachers. For example Para's that have been in the classroom longer than the teacher/power differential/credibility issues. The code can also be used in regard to stress associated with teacher's who must take on the role of a manager (Ex. Difficulty effectively allocating this human resource.) Personality conflicts between teachers and paras can also be endorsed using this code.

Parent Support Negative (PSN)

Lack of involvement, over-involvement or otherwise unproductive interactions with parents of students.

**Potential for Physical Injury
(PFPI)**

This code is used for instances when teachers report having to deal with students who engage in assaultive and aggressive behaviors.

District Support Negative (DSN)

This code should be utilized when a interviewee reports a lack of effective support from the district level. This support can encompass broad program guidelines, lack of relevant staff development opportunities or limited ability to staff with other professionals in the district that work in similar positions. Lack of relevant staff development activities

**Paperwork and Legal
Requirement Stress (PLRS)**

Use this code when interviewees report that paperwork is overwhelming, a hassle, creates fear legal reprisal for failing to meet standards, frustration related to the fact that paperwork takes time away from the students. This code should also include extended ARD meetings that relate to paperwork/IEP issues. Having to contact CPS or police.

	Insulators	Stations
Classroom/Individual	CAI, PS, PQT, PPB, SRT, ATSS PSP, ATE-I, OA-P, OA-L OA-N, EX-P, EX-U, EX-J, ITS,	OA-E, CAS, QTB, PF, ISRT, LSSI-I, PSN, PFPI, LES-SSR, LER
Campus	ASP, ATE-C, ATE-Tr, OA-P, OA-N, OA-L, PPSI, ATE-MS, ATE-I	OA-E, PF, LSSI-C, LES-MS, LES-C, LES-T, ASN, PPS
District	ATE-MS, ATE-S, ATE-Tr, OA-P, OA-L OA-N, ATE-TECH SAL-P, SAL-N, SAL-E, ATE-I	OA-E, LSSI-D, LES-MS, LES-T, DSN, PLRS, LES-CUR, LES-SSR
General Things that cross levels	OA-P, OA-N, ATE-MS, ATE-I	OA-E, PF

Updated 12/09/10

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3278 Fax 940-898-3416
e-mail: IRB@twu.edu

May 27, 2010

Dear Mr. Rousseau:

Re: Attrition and Retention of Special Education Self-Contained Teachers: Should I Stay or Should I Go

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp and a copy of the annual/final report are enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. The signed consent forms and final report must be filed with the Institutional Review Board at the completion of the study.

This approval is valid one year from May 7, 2010. According to regulations from the Department of Health and Human Services, another review by the IRB is required if your project changes in any way, and the IRB must be notified immediately regarding any adverse events. If you have any questions, feel free to call the TWU Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Raonda R. Bickley
Dr. Raonda Bickley, Co-Chair
Institutional Review Board - Denton

enc.

cc. Dr. Dan Miller, Department of Psychology & Philosophy
Dr. Kathy DeCruellas, Department of Psychology & Philosophy
Graduate School