Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations

Office of Graduate Studies

5-2023

Factors of Special Education Teacher Attrition Rates

Christopher Berry

Recommended Citation

Berry, Christopher, "Factors of Special Education Teacher Attrition Rates" (2023). *Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations*. 1752.
https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/1752

FACTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER ATTRITION RATES

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

_____

By

Christopher R. Berry

May 2023

FACTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER ATTRITION RATES

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

by

Christopher R. Berry

May 20, 2023

Approved by:

Dr. Sharon Brown-Welty, Committee Chair, Education

Dr. Hannah Kivalahula-Uddin, Committee Member

Dr. Jacqueline Mantz-Rodriguez, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

Purpose. The purpose of this quantitative research study is to understand the perceptions of special education teachers who are deciding to leave the teaching profession, as well as rank order the most important factors associated with teachers' decisions to leave. It was designed to obtain perceptions about (a) differences between elementary and secondary settings, (b) differences between novice and veteran teachers, and (c) the most significant factors that influence the decision to leave.

Methodology. This quantitative research study utilized an electronic survey to gather the perceptions of special education teachers. A quantitative design was selected to allow for comparison between groups of teachers.

Findings. There was a difference between elementary and secondary teachers on their rate of considering leaving the teaching profession. There was a difference between elementary novice and veteran teachers along with a difference in secondary novice and veteran teachers. The most significant factor reported by teachers was administrative support.

Conclusion. Secondary teachers are considering leaving the teaching profession at a higher rate than elementary teachers. Secondary veteran teachers are considering leaving the teaching profession at higher rates than elementary novice and elementary veteran teachers. Administrative support from the site

level and the district level were rated the most important factors that impact teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession.

Recommendations. The school district should implement professional development opportunities for district adminstrators and site-based administrators, to improve their abilities to support special education teachers to reduce the attrition rates.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My dissertation is dedicated to my family. I would like to thank Traci, Dakota, and Myles for all their patience, love, and support they have shown me over the past three years. Your words of encouragement motivated me to keep going. Thank you for taking on additional work at home to give me time to write. This achievement is shared with all of you because I could not have done it without all of you.

Dr. Sharon Brown-Welty, my California State University, San Bernardino dissertation chair. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You took on a huge challenge when deciding to work with me and you never gave up, never were critical, and were always supportive. Without you, I do not feel I would have completed this journey. For that, I am eternally grateful.

Dr. Hannah Kivalahula-Uddin, for seeing the potential I had as an educator and leader in the field. Your positive words of encouragement and recruiting me to teach in your classes as an expert inspired me more than you can ever imagine.

To Dr. Jacqueline Mantz-Rodriguez, thank you for your continuous support throughout this journey. Your friendship and belief in me continued to push me towards the finish line. For that, you will always be a friend.

To my parents, Robert and Karen Berry, and James and Carol Halfmann, all of you instilled in my early on and throughout my educational journey that

education is fundamentally the most important thing I could ever do for myself. You encouraged me towards this degree.

Lastly, I want to thank my colleagues and friends. I am appreciative of your genuine excitement and inspiration to achieve my goal.

My dissertation is dedicated to my wife Traci Berry. Thank you for instilling in me your belief that I could complete this journey. Even on the darkest nights, where light was not visible, you were the candlelight that carried me forward. Thank you for being my partner and continuing to guide me through life. I know you are always supporting me, taking care of me, and challenging me to be better. But I love you more!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Background

Special education teacher attrition rates are nearly double the rate of regular education teacher attrition rates. According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) small changes in teacher attrition rates have large impacts on teacher labor markets that already have the challenge of filling special education teacher positions. The problem of hiring and retaining qualified special education teachers has been reported in 49 out of 50 states (Sayman, Chiu, and Lusk, 2018). Similarly, Bettini, Cummings, O'Brien, Brunsting, Ragunathan, Sutton, and Chopra (2020), Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2015) reported challenges of finding qualified special education teachers to fill positions in hard-to-staff schools with programs consisting of Emotional Disturbed (ED) students. Additionally, the shortage of highly qualified special education teachers has created a need for alternative certification programs to find, minimally train, and place new special education teachers into classrooms to be compliant with Every Student Succeeds act (ESSA) of 2015.

Retaining special education teachers has become a priority for most school districts. Many factors impact special education attrition rates including school funding models (Stock & Carriere, 2021), teacher burnout (Williams & Dikes, 2017), low sense of teacher efficacy (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, and Leaf, 2010), perceptions of support and training (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2015),

caseload management (Pas et al, 2010), and perceived levels of support
(Hughes et al., 2015).

Understanding the factors associated with special education teacher
attrition rates could lead to improved hiring practices that result in less turnover,
reduced costs of teacher replacement, and improved academic gains for special
education students.

Context of the Study

A school district in southern California was utilized. The school district has
28 schools and more than 21,000 students. The district's minority enrollment is
90 percent. Additionally, 66.7 percent of students are economically
disadvantaged. The student body at the schools served by school district are 9.9
percent White, 4.5 percent Black, 2.7 percent Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander,
79.9 percent Hispanic/Latino, 0.5 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, and
0.1 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. In addition, 2.5 percent of
students are two or more races, and zero percent have not specified their race or
ethnicity. Also, 48 percent of students are female, and 52 percent of students are
male. At schools in the school district, 66.7 percent of students are eligible to
participate in the federal free and reduced-price meal program and 39.8 percent
of students are English language learners.

The school districts employment does not match the student
demographics. Currently, 66 percent of teachers are White, 24 percent of
teachers are Hispanic, 10 percent of teachers are Black, with the remaining

teachers are Asian, Native American, or other. The current student to teacher ratio is 22.58 to one.

Problem Statement

The problem this study addresses is the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates across elementary and secondary settings that influence special education teachers to leave the teaching profession.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates in a school district in southern California and compare elementary school settings with secondary school settings on the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates. This research will add to the existing literature on special education teacher attrition rates and expand the research with comparing different educational settings to see if there is a difference in what impacts special education teachers to leave the profession.

Research Questions or Hypothesis

The research questions are:

RQ 1: What, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates in elementary settings versus secondary settings in a southern California school district?

RQ 2: What, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates from beginning teachers and veteran teachers in elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?

RQ 3: What, if any, are the most significant factors that influence Special education teachers to leave the profession within the elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it examines the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates between elementary and secondary settings, novice versus experienced special education teachers, and what factors most impact special education teachers to leave the teaching profession (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2019). Research results reported by Cruz et. al., (2020) indicated that when the local control funding formula (LCFF) was implemented, the achievement gap between income groups and racially divided groups, the achievement gaps were closed. The results for special education students, which are not an identified group in the LCFF model, found that special education students in high poverty schools are significantly underfunded compounding the problem as seen in the achievement of special education students in mathematics and English. There were clear differences between the staffing at high poverty and low poverty schools, with high poverty schools having a disproportionately high number of teacher interns nearly twice the rate found in low poverty schools (Cruz et. al., 2020). Understanding this, Cruz et. al., (2020)

suggests that school districts help in completion of special education degrees, additional supports when newly hired, and having human resources do a better job of ensuring that there is a balance of experience across their schools to improve the academic gains of special education students.

William and Dikes (2015) reported results that indicated that special education teacher attrition rates are 13 percent annually. This rate is twice the rate of regular education teachers. Teachers that experience high levels of job stress are more prone to burnout. Teachers that experience emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP) or personal accomplishment (PA) often report wanting to leave the profession. These factors are significant because special education teachers have additional burdens placed on them including additional paperwork, additional meetings, additional time to complete work outside of school hours, all of which increase special education teacher attrition rates (William & Dikes, 2015). High caseloads of special education teachers increased teacher burnout while more middle school teachers experienced emotional exhaustion. The study by Williams and Dikes (2015) found that special education combination classes, where there were a large variety of disabilities and varying levels of student ability were the most stressful classes to teach. Additionally, their study gave suggestions for male special education teachers to increase networks of support and for female special education teachers to develop the use of wellness programs and reducing stress to improve special education teacher attrition rates.

Lastly, school administrators should watch for signs of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA) in special education teachers and work to manage caseloads, reduce paperwork, and provide teachers time during the scheduled workday to complete tasks to reduce special education teacher attrition rates (Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Another aspect of special education teacher attrition rates is classroom management. According to Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, and Leaf (2010) special education teachers that had a high sense of teacher efficacy had better instructional practices, were more initiative-taking, fewer disciplinary problems, and higher student achievement. Conversely, special education teachers that had a low sense of teacher efficacy had less variety in instructional practices, were more reactive, and higher disciplinary problems, and lower student achievement. Newer and less experienced special education teachers reported high levels of having a low sense of self efficacy, or ability to teach students. These factors increased teacher burnout and increased special education teacher attrition rates.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) reported results of high special attrition rates are due to a lack of administrative support, teacher salaries, and teacher preparation programs. Special education teacher attrition rates were reported nationally at 16 percent, twice the rate of regular education teacher attrition rates. Carver-Thomas et. al., (2019) results indicated that the highest turnover rates were in the South while the lowest turnover rates were in the

6

Northeast. Additionally, Title I schools have attrition rates 50 percent higher than non-Title I schools, Math and Science is near 70 percent attrition rates, and special education teachers prepared through alternatively certification programs are near 80 percent of the special education teachers that leave the profession. Additional findings include that a teacher's ethnicity may impact attrition rates. White special education teachers tend to move from urban and rural settings to suburban settings, while minority special teachers tend to be hired at rural and urban school settings. When teachers do not feel supported by their administrators, there is a higher sense of leaving the profession or position for another which negatively impacts special education teacher attrition rates.

Similar results were reported by Bettini, Cumming, O'Brien, Brunsting, Ragunathan, Sutton, and Chopra (2020) when investigating hard to staff schools of special education teachers who teach emotionally disturbed (ED) students. Emotional and Behavioral Disordered Classrooms (EBD) have higher rates of burnout among teachers and higher levels of teacher attrition rates. Teachers reported feeling high levels of emotional exhaustion (EE), a low sense of self efficacy when working with ED students, and often had teachers that had less teaching experience and practice working with students with emotional disabilities. Administrative support was a key in determining if teachers stayed or left the placement, so administrators should ensure that they manage their teachers, check in frequently, and ensure that the teachers feel supported by the administration to reduce teacher attrition rates.

Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2015) researched principal support and retention and reported that teachers who rate their level of support from their administration were more likely to stay at the within the current placement and those that did not feel supported by their administration, were more likely to leave the current placement. Interestingly, administrators rated themselves high in supporting teachers did not change teacher attrition rates, but how teachers viewed their levels of support impacted their decision make to stay or leave the current placement. It was suggest by Hughes et. al., (2015) that more administration should be hired to reduce the workload on administrators so that they could spend more time with personal interactions with teachers and increase their ability to support special education teachers.

Sayman, Chiu, and Lusk (2018) researched whether critical incidents impacted how teachers decided to stay or leave a job setting. Results reported included that 51 percent of school districts reported struggling to find highly qualified special education teachers. Most special education teachers were being hired from alternative certification programs and were less educated, less trained, and required the most support from administration and other support personnel. New special education teachers reported having too much stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion (EE) depersonalization (DP), and less personal accomplishment (PA) than more experienced teachers. Sayman et. al., (2018) reported the special education teacher attrition rates were nearly double of regular education teachers and found the classroom management supports, lack

of training in the management of paraprofessionals and conflicts, and ability to collaborate across all stakeholders negatively impacted special education teacher attrition rates.

Lastly, states that have census funding models increases special education teacher attrition rates (Stock & Carrier, 2021). Special education teachers are more likely to move schools (from rural/urban to suburban) and move from special education to regular education positions. States that have bounty systems increases special education populations and increases the need for special education teachers. The cost to replace special education teachers was reported as being eight billion dollars nationwide in (2016) by Stock et. al., (2021), which makes it decreasing special education teacher attrition rates that much more important. Reducing turnover of teachers allows for improved academic growth of students with disabilities, less expenses to school districts, and development of teachers through practice and experiences in working with students with disabilities.

In summary, researchers have investigated the factors associated with teacher attrition rates and the current research will add to the body of literature by investigating if there are differences between special education teacher attrition rates between elementary and secondary settings, differences between novice and experienced special education teacher attrition rates at elementary and secondary settings, and what are the most significant factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates in a school district in southern California.

Theoretical Framework / Underpinnings

The theoretical frameworks used in the study will be the theories of human, social, structural, and positive psychological capital to explore the complex and interwoven factors that are associated with special education teacher attrition rates. Mason and Poyatos Matas (2015) cited that human capital and social capital were not enough to explain the complex nature of teacher attrition. Mason et. al., (2015) added the use of structural and positive psychological capital to better understand the complex nature of teacher attrition.

Human Capital Theory focuses on the presence, quality, and nature of pre-service education that develop the professional skills and knowledge of teachers. This knowledge allows for additional opportunities, growth, and further professional development. Mason et. al., (2015) reported that professional development opportunities could potentially determine attrition rates based on whether participants rated the professional development opportunities as positive professional development opportunities or professional development opportunities as negative professional development opportunities. This aspect of Human Capital Theory would be like teachers reporting on their self-efficacy to work with students in their classrooms.

Social capital theory focuses on the connection between individuals within the school culture. Schools with strong social capital theory develop solid relationships that fosters a trusting climate within the school between administration, teachers, and staff (Mason et. al., 2015). This aspect of Social

Capital would be similar to teachers feeling supported from administration, master teachers, support personnel, and feeling connected and valued as a member of the school community.

Structural capital theory focuses on the physical infrastructure of the school, resources, and equipment. Mason et. al., (2015) outlined many different factors that would be listed under structural capital theory including work conditions, workload, accountability systems, salaries, and employment conditions. This aspect of Structural Capital would be similar to factors associated with teacher burnout, emotional exhaustion, and lack of appropriate resources.

Positive Psychological Capital focuses on the personality traits that make individuals productive. Mason et. al, (2015) outlined individuals with a high sense of positive psychological capital display desirable attitudes and behaviors while individuals with a low sense of positive psychological capital display negative attitudes, behaviors, and performance. This aspect of Positive Psychological Capital would be similar to depersonalization and personal accomplishment in special education teachers.

<center>Delimitations</center>

This study is delimited to a single south-western state in the United States. Additionally, it is delimited to teachers with the appropriate special education credentials located in either primary or secondary school settings. A further

delimitation is that this study was not randomized and cannot be generalized to other schools or situations.

Definitions of Key Terms

Alternative Certification Programs – programs that teach the requirements for special education credentialing while individuals concurrently accept the responsibilities of a fully credentialed teacher while attending certification classes to gain full licensure (Sayman, Chiu, & Lusk, 2018).

Attrition – teachers leaving the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

Beginning or Novice Teacher – Teachers with less than three years of experience. (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

Burnout – is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do people work of some kind (Maslach & Jackson, 2003).

Depersonalization (DP) – is the dehumanization towards others and conscious effort to detach and distance ones-self from others (Maslach & Jackson, 2003).

Emotional Exhaustion (EE) – describes the physical deterioration, emotional overburden, and lack of energy and enthusiasm (Maslach & Jackson, 2003).

Personal Accomplishment (PA) – the loss of feeling qualified and successful that is characterized by feeling ineffective and hopeless (Maslach & Jackson, 2003).

Special Education Teacher – a teacher that teaches multiple subject areas and in addition, they are assigned a caseload responsibility for creating, testing,

evaluating, writing, and conducting Individual Education Plans (IEP's) (Williams & Dykes, 2017).

Teacher Efficacy – negative beliefs about their ability to teach students (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010).

Summary

Retaining special education teachers has become a priority for most school districts. According to William and Dikes (2015), special education attrition rates are 13 percent annually. Understanding the factors associated with special education attrition rates can decrease the attrition rates and keep more new teachers in their classroom assignments (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2019). When school districts retain qualified teachers, the costs associated with replacing teachers decreases and student outcomes improve over time (Stock et. al., 2021). Understanding the factors associated with special education attrition rates between elementary and secondary, novice versus experienced special education teachers, and what factors most impact special education teachers to leave the teaching profession can decrease teacher attrition rates, lower costs to school districts, and improve outcomes for students.

The goal of this study is to examine the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates in a school district in southern California to better understand what factors school leaders can focus on to decrease attrition rates of special education teachers. The following literature review will examine the factors that are associated with special education attrition rates and how these

factors impact special education teachers' decisions to stay or leave the teaching profession.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review will explore special education teacher attrition rates and will support the current research study examining attrition of special educators. Special education attrition rates are nearly double the rate of regular education teacher attrition rates. The themes that arose from the research articles in this literature review were factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates, challenges of teachers prepared for special education settings through alternative certification programs, school funding, and teacher burnout.

The purposes of the current research study are twofold: to examine the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates in a school district in Southern California and to compare elementary school settings with secondary school settings on the factors associated with Special Education Teacher attrition rates. This research will add to the existing literature on special education teacher attrition rates and expand the research by comparing different educational settings to see if there is a difference in what impacts special education teachers to leave the profession.

The research questions for the current research study are:

RQ 1: What, if any, are the differences between special educational teacher attrition rates in elementary settings versus secondary settings?

RQ 2: What, if any, are the differences between special education teacher attrition rates from beginning teachers and veteran teachers in elementary and secondary settings?

RQ 3: What, if any, are the most significant factors that influence special education teachers to leave the profession within the elementary and secondary settings?

<center>Factors that Predict or Impact Teacher Attrition</center>

Research on special education teachers have found that hard to staff schools, such as schools in urban and rural areas, schools with high minority student populations, schools with high levels of socioeconomic students, and schools with specialized programs for students with Behavioral and Emotional Disorders (EBD) are usually staffed with younger, inexperienced teachers, that received training through alternative certification programs. These teachers often leave the teaching profession for a variety of issues, but often report that not being prepared for the complexity of disabilities in a classroom is a major reason for leaving their current positions.

According to Bettini, Cummings, O'Brien, Brunsting, Ragunathan, Sutton, and Chopra (2019), Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019), Hughes and O'Reilly (2015), and Sayman, Chiu, and Lusk, (2018) teacher candidates that

were hired under programs that utilized alternatively certification programs had higher rates of special education teacher attrition rates, nearly double, between teachers hired at non-Title I schools versus Title I schools, with 11 percent to 20 percent respectively (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

Several research studies have examined the attrition rates of teachers who were prepared in alternative certification programs. Differences between the studies indicated that there were a variety of reasons that impact a teacher's decision to stay or leave the teaching profession that interact in complex ways. The study conducted by Carver-Thomas and Darling Hammond (2019) focused on national data and large sample sizes across the entire United States whereas the studies conducted by Bettini et al., (2019) and Hughes et al., (2015) focused on a very narrow population of special education teachers that worked with students in hard to staff schools with students with emotional disorders in self-contained classrooms.

Teacher attrition impacts an already strained educational system with increases in teacher shortages. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) indicated that small changes in teacher attrition rates have a large impact on teacher labor markets. In response to these shortages, districts rely on hiring inexperienced or unqualified teachers, increasing class sizes, reducing the classes offered, which impacts student learning and outcomes. Understanding the causes of teacher attrition may improve the hiring practices of districts and allow them to be better prepared to target, interview, hire, and retain high quality

teachers that will remain in their positions, thus reducing the attrition rates and improving student outcomes.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond undertook a study on teacher attrition with the following research questions:

1. What are national turnover rates and how do they vary for distinctive locations and types of teachers and in key shortage areas?

2. What factors currently predict teacher turnover?

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) used a quantitative study looking at the descriptive statistics and differences of means test results to identify differences in the turnover rates across teacher and school characteristics. The data was drawn from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (2011-12) and Teacher Follow Up Survey (2012-2013). The Teacher Follow Up Survey was used as the instrument to measure teacher responses and had a response rate of 79.6%. No other statistical information was reported about the participants in the study.

The first research question addressed the national turnover rates and how they vary by geographic regions of the United States. In addition, the question addressed the types of teachers and key shortage areas. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) reported that turnover rates varied greatly across the states and regions of the country, types of teachers, and among different types. The current national turnover rate of teachers at the time of this study was 16

percent. Of the 16 percent, 14 percent were involuntary turnover, 18 percent were retirement, 30 percent were voluntary, preretirement leavers, and 37 percent accounted for voluntary movers. The national rates allowed for a comparison between teacher attrition rates nationally as compared to locally.

Other findings reported in the study indicated that the highest turnover rates were in the South and the lowest turnover rates were in the Northeast, while Title I schools, schools with high populations of students of color, special education teachers, and teachers prepared through alternative programs had the highest attrition rates (Carver-Thomas & Darling Hammond, 2019).

The second research question analyzed what factors predicted teacher turnover. Key concepts explored were school characteristics, teacher characteristics, subject areas, and working conditions. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) reported that teacher attrition rates in schools that had 25 percent students of color were higher than schools with fewer students of color. Teacher characteristics were reported in terms of beginning career, mid-year careers, and end of career categories with the highest attrition rates being in new and end of career positions. Teachers in Title I schools reported the highest attrition rates regardless of subject area expertise. Special education teacher attrition rates had the highest attrition rates of all teachers' subject areas regardless of school characteristics. In their study, constructs that were significant at $p < .001$ were school size, teachers younger than 30, and constant administrative support. Items reported as significant at $p < .01$ were 3rd quartile

percentage of students of color enrolled, top quartile percentage of students of colored enrolled, teachers that were older than 50, teachers prepared by alternative certification pathways, mathematics and science teachers, special education teachers, foreign languages teachers, and some administrative support.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) indicated that school districts should plan to work towards improving teacher attrition rates to reduce the challenges of a teacher shortage. The authors suggested looking at compensation and posited that compensation packages should be evaluated to ensure that they are competitive with surrounding areas and are targeted to address the teacher shortage areas effectively. Improving teacher attrition rates may include assisting beginning teachers with debt relief, financial incentives for remaining with the district at the same site, and using mentoring and induction supports to support new teachers, specifically, those that were certified through alternative preparation programs. Additionally, developing teachers from within, using a grow your own model, could be beneficial in building an effective teacher pool to decrease teacher shortages.

Attrition of Teachers Who Teach Students with Emotional Disorders

According to Bettini, Cummings, O'Brien, Brunsting, Ragunathan, Sutton, and Chopra (2020), 37.1% of students in the United States with emotional or behavior disorders (EBD) receive instruction in a self-contained classroom for more than 60 percent of their day. As students with EBD have demonstrated

more learning and emotional difficulties in school, having highly qualified and skilled teachers working them should be a priority for every school district. The characteristics of teachers of students with EBD are they are often less experienced and prepared, report greater burnout, and have higher than average attrition rates.

Working conditions play a significant role in reducing special education teacher attrition rates. Administrators who attempt to help reduce attrition rates should focus on instructional responsibilities, planning time for teachers, paraprofessional support, and administrative support (Bettini et al, 2020). Prior research indicated that working conditions predict a teacher's intent to leave or stay in the job. Administrators who focus on supports for teachers may be able to reduce EBD teacher attrition rates. Bettini et al. (2020) undertook a research study to examine factors that may impact attrition rates for teachers of EBD students.

The researchers utilized the Conservation of Resources Theory, which indicates that individuals strategically use their resources to meet the demands of the job. If a teacher's workload, or the degree to which one feels that one's work can be completed in the time allotted, is too high, it increases the likelihood of EBD teacher attrition (Bettini et al., 2020). If the workload is manageable within the allotted time frames of employment, work exhaustion is reduced and potentially decreases the likelihood of EBD teacher attrition.

The purpose of the study was to examine how special educators' working conditions in self-contained settings for students with EBD relate to their affective responses and their intent to stay in teaching. The research questions for their study were:

RQ 1: Will resources and demands predict workload manageability such that special educators feel that workloads are more manageable when they have more resources and fewer demands.

RQ 2: Will workload manageability mediate relationships between resources/demands and affective outcomes such that teachers who experience fewer resources and more demands will perceive workloads as less manageable and therefore experience higher emotional exhaustion and stress.

RQ 3: Will emotional exhaustion and stress mediate a relationship between workload manageability and intent to stay such that teachers who rate workloads less manageable will experience more emotional exhaustion and stress and therefore be more likely to intend to leave.

RQ 4: Will administrative support predict intent to stay, both directly and indirectly.

A quantitative study was conducted using items from existing surveys and scales that demonstrated strong model fit and reliability in prior studies. Several questions were created based on qualitative studies with reviews from six expert reviewers. Definitions of common terms were developed and confirmed through

interviews with teachers. The population used was a national sample from special educators teaching in an EBD classroom for more than 50% of their day. The sample was stratified based on the size of the school to ensure each stratification was represented. In the end, forty-one districts agreed and 180 declined. The schools were not stratified by region, which was a limitation. Two hundred thirty-five teachers returned the survey, and out of those, 171 surveys met the criteria for use. Most of the participants identified as female (72.37%) and White/Caucasian (72.00%). Other respondents included 10 percent African American, 1.33 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 11.33 percent Hispanic or Latinx, and 4.67 percent as two or more races. Most teachers taught in self-contained classrooms (83.35%), had a degree in special education (61.04%), and a teaching certificate (72.23%) with an average of 12.74 years of service.

The examination of the complex relationships among demands, resources, affective responses, and intent to stay among special educators serving students with EBD in self-contained settings found that demands, resources, and affective responses accounted for 58% of the variance in intent to stay and they interacted in complex ways (Bettini et. al., 2019).

The first research question, that when special education teachers feel supported with resources their workloads are more manageable was found to be supported. Paraprofessional's training and trust in paraprofessionals, however, did not predict workload manageability in the full model. Additionally, supervising

more paraprofessionals predicted weaker workload manageability, greater stress and emotional exhaustion, and reduced intent to stay.

The findings related to the second research question found that workload manageability as a mediator was supported. Bettini et. al., (2019) found that when resources are low and demands are high, the conservation of resources theory predicts teachers having unmanageable workloads and burnout are more likely to plan to leave the profession.

The third research question, emotional exhaustion, and stress as mediators of teachers' intent to leave were found to be supported. Emotional exhaustion is a component of burnout, which is like depression, so when teachers reported feeling emotionally exhausted, their intent to leave was rated higher than when teachers reported low levels of feeling emotionally exhausted.

The fourth research question, administrative support as a predictor for teacher attrition were supported by the data. Administrative support directly and indirectly predicted a teacher's intent to stay or leave. When teachers reported strong administrative support, they had low intent to leave. Conversely, when teachers reported low administrative support, they had a higher intent to leave.

The researchers suggested that future research needs to be undertaken to address other special education groups, not just teachers of students with an emotional disturbance in a self-contained room. An additional area to investigate further, according to the researchers, is the role of the paraprofessionals and how this relationship could reduce teacher retention or increase teacher attrition.

Another area for future research is exploring the additional components of burnout. A third consideration for future research would be to look for any demands or resources not explored in the current study. Another study that explored special education teachers' attrition rates was conducted by Hughes, Matthew, and O'Reilly (2015) and explored special education teacher attrition rates for teachers who worked with students exhibiting emotional and behavioral problems.

Administrative Support for Teachers Who Teach Students with Emotional Disorders

The researcher's posited that special education teacher attrition rates are problematic across the United States, but even more discouraging in hard-to-staff schools. Hughes et al, (2015) indicated that hard-to-staff facilities work with students exhibiting emotional and behavioral problems. Many factors impact where special education teachers decide to work and the more challenging of situations makes it harder to staff schools. Understanding the needs of special education teachers needs for personal growth and support from the school administration was investigated to determine if this impacted teachers' decisions to stay or leave hard to staff schools.

Hughes et al., (2015) posed the following research questions:

1. Do principals' supportive behaviors correlate with the retention of teachers who work in hard-to-staff schools?

2. What is the relationship between teacher and principal support scores on the Administrative Support Survey?

3. Is grade level a factor in the perceived support of teachers?

Hughes et al., (2015) used a non-experimental correlational design to establish a relationship between variables without manipulation of the participants. The data were drawn from the Administrative Support Survey, which measured administrative supports expected and received by novice special education teachers. Twenty sites within a western state that fit the delimitations were selected with a total sample size of 80. The return rates for administrators were 85 percent while teachers were 51.25 percent.

The first research question was to determine a relationship, if any, between principal support and the retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. The teacher support scales were used to examine four specific areas, which were emotional support, environmental support, instructional support, and technical support. Teachers that were expecting to remain in their current position reported that principal support was extremely high in relation to why they were continuing to remain at the site. Statistically significant positive correlational coefficients were reported in emotional support, environmental supports, and technical supports ($r = .707$, $r = .633$, and $r = .374$, $p < .01$ respectively) and instructional supports ($r = .419$, $p < .05$). Teachers that were expecting to leave their positions at the end of the year reported a strong relationship between retention and support. Statistically significant positive correlational coefficients

were reported in emotional support, environmental support, instructional support, and technical support ($r = 1.0$, $r = 1.0$, $r = 1.0$, and $r = 1.0$, $p < .01$ respectively). Teachers that were unsure of staying in the current placement reported that emotional and instructional support was very high. No statistically significant results were reported for emotional, environmental, instructional, and technical ($r = .800$, $r = .400$, $r = .600$, and $r = 1.0$, $p > .05$ respectively).

The second research question was to determine the relationship between teacher and principal support scores on the Administrative Support Survey. The results indicated that administrators' perceptions of support differed from how teachers perceived the support offered from administrators. Principals scored their level of support greater than how teachers rated how much support they felt from the administrator in the areas of emotional support, environmental support, instructional support, and technical support ($x = 70.33$, $x = 47.00$, $x = 47.583$, and $x = 41.833$). Teachers' scores indicated that how teachers perceived the support from principals was different than that of the principals in the areas of emotional, environmental, instructional, and technical supports ($x = 64.657$, $x = 40.055$, $x = 35.171$, and $x = 34.514$, respectively). The greatest differences in offered support and perceived support was on instructional support, where the difference between mean scores was $x = 12.412$. No results were determined to be statistically significant.

The third research question looked to determine the relationship between principal and teacher support in relation to grade levels. Grade levels were

broken into 9-12 and multilevel k-12. In the areas of emotional, environmental, instructional, and technical supports, teachers and administrators reported that based on the given supports they perceived them as statistically significant at ($r =$ 1.0, $p < .05$) in grades 9-12 and only emotional and environmental supports were viewed as statistically significant ($r = .806$, $p = .05$ for both supports). All principals and teachers reported that administrative support was important regardless of grade level. Results indicated there was a difference in given and perceived supports between principals and teachers.

The results of the study demonstrated that teacher support impacts teacher retention in hard-to-staff schools. The areas of emotional and environmental support were rated highest. Additionally, teachers reported that personal growth and receiving support from administrators impacted teacher's decision-making process on staying or leaving hard-to-staff schools in this study.

Factors that Impact Attrition Rates for Alternatively Certified Special

Education Teachers

Special education teacher shortages are a pervasive problem across the United States. According to Sayman, Chiu, and Lusk, (2018), 49 out of the 50 states reported special education teacher shortages in the 2013-2014 school years. Additionally, 51 percent of school districts reported difficulty in recruiting highly qualified special education teachers. This shortage has led to alternative certification programs being created to find, minimally train, and place new

special education teachers into classrooms to be compliant with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015.

Alternative certification programs were more like boot camps to prepare teachers for what they may experience being placed into a classroom with students with disabilities (Sayman et. al., 2018). Many of the alternative certification programs have fewer requirements and time with students before entering the classroom. Many teachers in alternative certification programs are placed directly into classroom settings while participating in the certification programs, learning as they go. These teachers are forced to learn student pedagogy, behavior modification, students with disabilities, classroom management strategies, writing Individual Education Plans (IEP's), behavior support plans (BSP's) and meet all the criteria required from a school district to work towards permanency.

The requirements put on these teachers are immense and teacher retention rates are impacted. While regular education teacher attrition rates are near 7.6 percent, special education teacher attrition rates for those in the alternative certification programs is nearly double the average at 12.3 percent (Sayman, Chiu, and Lusk, 2018). The purpose of this study was to investigate special education teachers in alternative certification programs to better understand the challenges faced in their daily routines that impact their decisions to stay in the profession or leave.

The hypothesis of this study was to explore critical incidents techniques reported by teachers in the alternative certification program to better understand how the impact of the needs of first- and second-year special education teachers within the classroom environment and how it affects special educators' retention rates.

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of critical incidents for students in an alternatively certified special education program?

RQ 2: Are these critical incidents sufficient to address strengths and needs of the program?

RQ 3: Will addressing the critical issues assist in retention of special educators in the field?

A qualitative research design utilized the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to help signify important, specific events and understand how participants perceived the events. Participants were asked to journal authentic events that they felt were important, or unique, in how they perceived their work as an educator. The sample was drawn from a unique population through purposive sampling, where 35 participants were enrolled in an alternative certification program at a western United States serving primarily Hispanic serving institution. Of the 35 participants, 69 critical incidents were recorded.

A template was utilized for teachers to record incidents in a similar pattern that consisted of seven distinct parts that included when, where, who, what, why, outcome, and reflection of an incident. Data was read and categories were

created, then re-read critically, coded, and identified in categories and sub-categories. Triangulation was utilized to improve the trustworthiness of the study including member checks, peer review, and observations.

Three major categories were identified: student behavior, collaboration, and job satisfaction. Student behavior was identified as either positive or negative. Collaboration was identified as positive or negative interactions with administration, peers, paraprofessionals, and parents. Job satisfaction was listed as either positive or negative. Student behavior had 13 positives and 20 negatives. Collaboration had two positive and four negative interactions with administration, one positive and six negative interactions with paraprofessionals, zero positive and two negative interactions with parents, and two positive and four negatives with peers. Attitude toward the job had four positives and nine negatives. (See table 1 below).

Table 1

Number of Incidents Within Categories

Category	Positives	Negatives
Student Behavior	13	20
Administrative Collaboration	2	6
Paraprofessionals	1	6
Parents	0	2
Colleagues	2	4
Attitude toward job	4	9

Table 1 continued

Number of Incidents Within Categories

Category	Positives	Negatives
Total Incidents	22	47

Note: Incidents report by participants that they deemed important in decision making to stay or leave a teaching position.

Out of these incidents, Sayman et. al., (2018) indicated that classroom management strategies are one of the most critical needs areas of teachers working with students with disabilities. Additional findings were noted that teachers in the alternative certification program lack the training in management of paraprofessionals and conflict resolution techniques. Another challenge of teachers in the alternative certification program that needs to be developed are the skills needed to collaborate with a variety of stakeholders including parents, community members, paraprofessionals, administration, and teachers.

According to the researchers, one aspect that future research should focus on is the importance placed on classroom management, collaboration, mentorship, and evidence-based practices that are and should be taught in the alternative program to produce teachers who can be reflective, critical of their own teaching methodologies, and are able to seek out research that supports the needs that they are experiencing in the classroom setting.

The findings by Hughes et al. (2015), Bettini et al. (2019), and Carver-Thomas et al. (2019) were similar in findings in the areas of administrative

support which was a predictor of special education teacher attrition rates, working conditions was found to be a predictor of special education teacher attrition rates, and finally, stress of the job was a predictor of special education teacher attrition rates.

While these constructs were found to have an impact on teacher attrition other researchers have focused on issues such as school funding or teacher burnout as factors that were also important to explore.

School funding is important to understand because the way special education is funded varies from state to state. The type of funding impacts the number of special education students serviced, which in turn impacts how many special education teachers are needed. Some of the funding sources fail to pay for additional students that enter special education which means that special education teachers workload increases, their frustrations increase, and districts bear the costs of educating additional students with fewer and less qualified special education teachers leading to increased teacher burnout and higher attrition rates of special education teachers.

School Funding and Teacher Burnout

School Funding

Funding special education began with the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). In 1976, 8.3 percent of total public-school enrollment was dedicated to special education. In 2015, 13.2 percent of the total public-school enrollment was dedicated to special education (Stock & Carriere, 2021). To deal

with the rise in costs of educating special education populations, many different forms of funding have been used by school districts to reduce costs. Examples of different types of funding are per pupil, per staff funding, and cost reimbursement models. These systems tended to incentivize identification and qualifying for special education services. Other examples of different types of funding are census or lump sum models. These models fund on the total population of special education students in a district rather than on special education criteria. These systems tend to decrease special enrollment specifically in the areas of more subjectively diagnosed and less severe disabilities (Stock & Carriere, 2021). What is less understood is how census or lump sum models impact special education teachers.

Special education teacher turnover rates are high compared to regular education teachers. Researchers have identified factors associated with teacher turnover, which are school characteristics, teacher characteristics, extra burden of paperwork and meetings, all contribute to the turnover rates of special education teachers. Funding sources may also play a large role in special education teacher turnover rates. According to Stock and Carriere (2021), census or lump sum models decrease the number of special education students therefore creating less of a demand for special education teachers.

The purpose of their study was to link special education enrollment and teacher turnover literature by examining the impact of state special education

funding policies on teacher turnover and other outcomes. The research questions for their study were:

RQ 1: Census funding causes students at the margin to be shifted into general education classrooms, thus reducing the demand for special education teachers, we should expect to see reductions in their relative employment and earnings.

RQ 2: Census funding could reduce the supply of special education teachers if these teachers move toward general education degrees.

RQ 3: What impact does census funding have on the employment rates of special education teachers and their pay?

The research design was a quantitative research design using the natural experiment generated by changes in special education funding laws that allows for comparing changes over time in outcomes among teachers in states that implemented census funding against similar outcomes among teachers in non-census states using the differences-difference-in-differences (DDD) model. The methodology used was to examine teacher-level outcomes, heterogeneous effects, and state-level outcomes.

The major findings of this study were that special education teachers in states with census funding models were more likely to change schools, which created higher rates of turnover. In census states, special education teachers were 5 percentage points more likely to move schools than their counterparts in non-census states ($p < .057$).

A second major finding was that states with census funding policies had fewer special education teachers as more found their way into regular education classroom settings. These findings supported younger and more inexperienced special education teachers without master's degrees in the special education classrooms.

Lastly, census funding decreased special education enrollment, but not per pupil education expenditures. There were no major findings on census funding and overall enrollment, teacher staffing levels, and student standardized math test scores.

Future research around census funding needs to investigate the impact on the demand for special education teachers. As census funding decreases the number of students in special education, this should lower the demand for special education teachers, but census funding also has been found to increase special education teacher turnover rates, resulting in younger and more inexperienced teachers in special education classes.

Effect of School Funding on Opportunity Gaps for Students with Disabilities

Achievement gaps in education highlight the disparities between student populations. Funding reforms were created to address these gaps and narrow the achievement gaps. The local control funding formula (LCFF) allows school districts to address the needs of student's academic needs and divert more funding to support students. These increased resources allow for improvements in staffing, improved curriculum and extracurricular activities, and improvements

in facilities. Where changes in the LCFF have occurred, the gaps between various student populations have decreased. Special education funding has been a large part of this conversation and change process as the number of students with disabilities has continued to increase and now accounts for nearly 14 percent of all students enrolled in K-12 schools and the cost to educate these students is nearly three times the cost of a regular education student Cruz, Joon-Ho, Aylward, and Kramarczuk-Voulgarides (2020). In California, targeted student populations (TSP) have been identified to provide extra funding for districts to service which include English Language Learners (ELL's), low-income students, foster and at-risk youth, and homeless students (Cruz et. al., 2020). Special education is not part of this funding formula and additional funds are still based on average daily attendance (ADA) of identified students. Special education is one area that accounts for a large portion of a school district's budget yet is one area that is not seeing improvements in student outcomes.

Special education funding is underfunded because students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are placed into special education settings more often than students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, which means that schools that service special education students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds are not receiving all the monetary supports under the LCFF programming (Cruz et. al., 2020). Cruz et. al. (2020) posed the following research questions:

RQ1: How did funding per pupil on special education programs vary by the proportion of TSP students served in LAUSD elementary schools during the initial 5 years of implementation of the LCFF?

RQ2: How do changes in academic achievement measures of students placed into special education differ by poverty level?

RQ 3: What were the changes, if any, in academic achievement measures between elementary students with and without special education services as spending for special education programs increased in LAUSD?

RQ 4: How does the impact of expenditure increases on student achievement differ according to the overall availability of fully credentialed special education teachers within schools?

The research design was a quantitative research design. Cruz et. al., (2020) used a two-stage least squares regression model to examine the impact of state-level policy changes on student achievement measures for students receiving special education services and those not receiving services situated in low versus high poverty schools. Additionally, they examined the interaction between special education spending and the percent of TSP students within a school, and the interaction between special education spending and the percent of special education teachers with a full credential in the school. This research was done to determine the ways in which funding differences mattered in terms of student outcomes. The researchers used historical administrative data from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) for this study. The primary

source of data was school level finance data from the LAUSD school spending report for each of the 5 years following the enactment of the LCFF. The spending amounts were reported by a major program group, and it comprises school-level resources that support all operations (Cruz et al., 2020).

The results of the research focused on four major areas, which were school characteristics, per-pupil special education spending, budget, achievement, and gaps between groups, and funding increases, school variables, and achievement gaps. School characteristics were found to have some major differences. When the schools were organized into quartiles based on poverty levels, the schools with the highest SES averaged 60.9% of TSP students had lower percentages of students of color (Latino = 47.5%, African American = 12.4%, White = 24.2%) and had fully credentialed special education teachers by half the amount of high poverty schools. The schools with the lowest SES averaged 96.8% of TSP students, higher percentages of students of color (88.9% Latino, 7.8% African American, 1.6% White), and fully credentialed special education teacher positions were staff with the newest teachers or interns at double the rate of low quartile schools (11.3% to 5.9%) (Cruz et. al., 2020).

The local control funding formula increased the spending on TSP programs evenly among the low, middle, and high groups from 2014 till 2017, but differences occurred in funding for special education funding. From 2013 through 2017, low TSP schools increased their funding for special education students at a higher rate than mid or high TSP schools. Additionally, low poverty schools

were able to keep and retain more experienced special education teachers while high poverty schools struggled with retention of special education teachers and had higher numbers of newly credentialed teachers or interns on their campuses.

Test score results demonstrated a difference between low and high poverty schools. Low poverty schools test scores improved with more special education students testing proficient than students in high poverty schools. These scores were significantly different in both math and English language arts. More students with disabilities in high income schools performed better than students in low-income schools. Special education students passing the math and English language arts assessments was much lower in high poverty schools than low poverty schools.

Lastly, Cruz et. al., (2020) found that spending increases did not show any significant effects for students with disabilities in schools with average poverty levels.

As this study has severe limitations on generalizability, future research should focus on areas of the quality of special education delivery, the effect of funding increases on curricular structure and quality of special education services more directly needed, and the social forces that generate patterns of inequality of educational opportunities.

Implications of Demographic Variables as Related to Special Education Teacher Burnout

The attrition rates for special education teachers have been high in the United States for an exceptionally long time. Williams and Dikes (2017) indicated that general education teachers have various duties associated with their jobs, the special education teacher has the same requirements plus additional duties and responsibilities including case managing responsibilities, increased paperwork, testing and assessing students, maintenance of records, increased meetings, different and changing technologies, and more time communicating with all stakeholders. All these additional requirements add more stress to the job of being a special education teacher.

The most common definition of burnout comes from the work of Maslach and Jackson (1981). Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA) that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind. Emotional exhaustion (EE) is defined by physical deterioration, emotional overburden, and lack of energy and enthusiasm. Depersonalization (DP) was defined as the dehumanization of others and a conscious effort to detach and distance ones-self from others. Personal accomplishment (PA) was defined as the loss of feeling qualified and successful that was characterized by feeling ineffective and hopeless. The focus of their research was to explore special education teachers' emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA) across 10 demographic variables. Williams and Dikes (2015) posed the following research questions:

1. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to gender?

2. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ sustainably with respect to age?

3. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to marital status?

4. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to degree attainment?

5. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to years of teaching experience?

6. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to caseload numbers?

7. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to grade level taught?

8. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to the number of students taught daily?

9. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to the number of additional hours spent completing paperwork?

10. Do special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differ substantially with respect to teaching assignments?

Williams and Dikes (2015) used a quantitative research design, which allowed for the use of descriptive statistics to be performed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between males and females, married and unmarried, relative to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The population surveyed consisted of 215 special education teachers employed by a school district in the South. The total sample used was 65 special education teachers. Direct data entry was the method used. A coding schema was used to transfer data from surveys to statistical analysis software. Of specific note, high burnout is reflected by high scores on the EE and DP subscales coupled with low scores on the PA subscale and vice versa.

The first research question was to determine if special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differed with respect to gender. The results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between females and males pertaining to perceptions of EE [$t(63) = .255$, $p = .800$], or perceived DP [$t(63) = -1.856$, $p = .068$] and no significant differences between gender and PA [$t(63) = .650$, $p = .518$].

The second research question was to determine if special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differed substantially with respect to age. Average score results from each age group were calculated. The results indicated that the younger age group (21-31) was experiencing lower rates of emotional exhaustion (57%), and therefore the lowest rates of perceived burnout. The older age group (42-51) was experiencing higher rates of emotional

exhaustion (59%) and the greatest percentage of depersonalization (23%); while the age group (52-61) reported the greatest percentage of low depersonalization (91%).

The third research question was to determine if the special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differed substantially with respect to marital status. The results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences among the sample regarding marital status and perceptions of emotional exhaustion [t(63) = .721, p = .474], marital status and depersonalization [t(63) = .863, p = .391], and marital status related to personal accomplishment [t(63) = 1.177, p = .244).

The fourth research question was to determine if the special education teachers' perceptions of burnout differed substantially with respect to degree attainment. Average score results from the different degree attainment. The results indicated that the group holding specialist degrees had the highest rates of emotional exhaustion (75%), and the highest rates of depersonalization (100%). The master's degree group reported having the highest percentage of personal accomplishment (64%) compared to those only holding a specialist degree (25%).

The fifth research question was to determine if the special education teacher's perceptions of burnout differed with respect to years of teaching experience. The results indicated that teachers having more than 22 years of teaching experience had the highest rates of emotional exhaustion (50%).

All groups, when using the variable of years of teaching experience, had higher levels of personal accomplishment.

The sixth research question was to determine if the special education teacher's perceptions of burnout differed substantially with respect to caseload numbers. The results indicated that teachers with higher caseload numbers, specifically greater than 26 students, had the highest scores on emotional exhaustion (67%). Across all caseload numbers, all participants scored high in the sense of personal accomplishment, indicating that caseload size did not negatively affect perceptions of personal accomplishment.

The seventh research question was to determine if the special education teacher's perceptions of burnout differed substantially with respect to grade level taught. The data showed lower grade levels, the lower the emotional exhaustion scores, while middle school teachers reported the highest level of emotional exhaustion (62%) and lowest personal accomplishment (34%). High school teachers reported the highest percentage of depersonalization (22%).

The eighth research question was to determine if the special education teacher's perceptions of burnout differed substantially with respect to the number of students taught daily. Participants reported that teaching 1-10 students had the lowest percentage of emotional exhaustion (35%), second greatest percentage for low depersonalization (70%), and strong sense of personal accomplishment (35%). From the data, the researchers concluded that lowering

the number of students taught may be the most effective method for reducing teacher burnout.

The ninth research question was to determine if the special education teacher's perceptions of burnout differed substantially with respect to the number of additional hours spent completing paperwork. The results indicated that the more time spent completing additional hours of paperwork the ratings of teachers' emotional exhaustion increased. Participants who reported working an additional 7 to 10 hours reported the highest ratings of emotional exhaustion (62%).

The tenth research question was to determine if the special education teacher's perceptions of burnout differed substantially with respect to teaching assignment. Participants reported that those who teach a combination of inclusion and resource had the highest percentages of emotional exhaustion (57%). Participants teaching in self-contained classrooms had the greatest percentage of low emotional exhaustion (67%) and a high percentage of personal accomplishment (67%).

Williams and Dikes (2015) offered suggestions on how to ameliorate burnout among special education teachers. They suggested male teachers who tend toward depersonalization, may benefit from creating supportive networks with other males. Females, who are prone to emotional exhaustion, may benefit from participating in wellness programs and learn to practice strategies to reduce stress and the effects of stress. Single special education teachers who were

found to be prone to burnout, may benefit from joining a social network to exchange ideas and feelings among the group. Teachers with advanced degrees, who are more prone to burnout, should be exposed to opportunities for advancement and recognition. For teachers that have more experience, they are more prone to burnout and administrators should monitor veteran teachers for sign of burnout. Caseloads were found to be correlated with burnout, so school districts should hire an appropriate amount of special education teachers to keep caseloads manageable to 15 students or less. The researchers suggested a 5-1 student to teachers' ratio should be used to reduce stress. In this study, middle and high school teachers were found to be more stressed on the job. As a result, school administrators should focus on reducing job-related stress by reducing or eliminating sources of stress if possible. Additionally, policy makers and educational leaders should work to eliminate repetitive and unnecessary forms of paperwork to reduce the hours after school to complete paperwork, as it was positively correlated with increased burnout. To reduce the stress on special education teachers and their teaching assignment, administrators could meet with teachers and give them more choice in what program they wish to teach in and make available time for collaboration and working with regular education teachers (see Table 2 below).

Table 2

Summary of Responses to Research Questions

Research Question	Emotional Exhaustion (EE)		Depersonalization (DP)		Personal Accomplishment (PA)	
RQ 1: Burnout to Gender	Males Not Significant	Females Not Significant	Males Not Significant	Females Not Significant	Males Not Significant	Females Not Significant
RQ 2: Burnout to Age	Age Group (21-31) Low rates of (EE)		Age Group (42-51) High rates of both (EE) and (DP)		Age Group (52-61) Low rates of (DP)	
RQ 3: Burnout to Marital Status	Married Not Significant	Unmarried Not Significant	Married Not Significant	Unmarried Not Significant	Married Not Significant	Unmarried Not Significant
RQ 4: Burnout to Degree Attainment	Specialist Degree Highest Rates of (EE)	Master's Degree Not Significant	Specialist Degree Lowest rate of (DP)	Master's Degree Not significant	Specialist Degree Lowest rate of (PA)	Master's Degree Highest rate of (PA)
RQ 5: Burnout to Years of Teaching	> 22 years of Experience	Greatest rate of (EE)	1-4 Years of Experience	Lowest rate of (DP)	5-10 years	Highest rate of (DP) and lowest rate of (EE)
RQ 6: Burnout to Caseload Numbers	5-10 Per Caseload = Lowest (EE)		11-15 Per Caseload = Greatest (PA)		> 26 Per Caseload = Highest (EE, DP)	
RQ 7: Burnout to Grade Level Taught	Grades: K-3 Lowest rate of (EE) Lowest rate of (DP) Highest rate of (PA)		Grades: 6-8 Highest rate of (EE) Lowest Rate of (PA)		Grades: 9-12 Highest rate of (DP)	
RQ 8: Burnout to the number of students taught	(11-20) students Lowest rate of (EE) Second lowest rate of (DP) High (PA)		(21-30) students Highest rate of (EE) Lowest rate of (DP) High (PA)		(> 30 students) Highest rate of (DP) High PA	
RQ 9: Burnout to	(1-3) hours extra Lowest (EE)		(4-6) hours extra Highest rate of (EE)		(7-10) hours extra	

additional hours completing paperwork	Lowest (DP) Highest (PA)		Highest rate of (DP) Second highest rate of (EE) Lowest rate of (PA)
RQ 10: Burnout to teaching assignment	Resource Only Lowest rate of (DP)	Combination of inclusion and resource Highest rate of (EE) and (DP)	Self-contained classrooms Lowest rate of (EE) and second highest rate of (PA)

Note: (EE) = Emotional exhaustion; (DP) = Depersonalization; (PA) = Personal

accomplishment as relating to teacher burnout.

A Multilevel Exploration of the Influences of Teacher Efficacy and Burnout on

Response to Student Problem Behavior

Special education teachers are leaving the profession for a variety of

reasons. Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, and Leaf (2010) suggested that teachers

with low teacher efficacy and high levels of burnout could be a potential reason.

Teacher efficacy, or negative beliefs about their ability to teach students, may

play a role in how teachers interact with students in terms of classroom

management, disciplinary actions, and motivation. Other factors such as burnout,

which is the feeling of being exhausted emotionally, having a higher sense of

depersonalization, or having the feeling of not feeling a personal sense of

accomplishment may impact students with teachers who are not available to their

students. Their study investigated the link between low teacher efficacy and high

incidences of burnout and how these factors may be related to student discipline.

The primary purpose of the study was to examine teacher characteristics,

such as efficacy and burnout, to inform the literature about professional

development aimed at improving student outcomes. The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ 1: Will low teacher efficacy and high burnout be associated with increased utilization of school-based services and disciplinary actions over the course of the school year?

RQ 2: Will there be an interaction between teacher efficacy and burnout that is associated with greatest need for outside assistance?

RQ 3: Will teachers with less teaching experience in schools with poor organizational health be more likely to refer students for academic support or disciplinary action?

RQ 4: Will teachers working in poorly organized schools who also experienced low efficacy and high burnout have the highest referral rates to special education or disciplinary actions?

The research design was a quantitative study where data was collected during the fall and spring of the 2007-2008 school years in Maryland Public Schools. Staff were surveyed using the Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Checklist (TOCA-C), which is a brief checklist of student behavior problems and adjustment to the classroom environment. Additionally, teachers responded to a series of five questions indicating whether each child had referrals for academic services or disciplinary issues. Lastly, staff completed a survey on Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) that assessed aspects of principal leadership, the school's ability to lobby for resources, and collegial

relationships among teachers and staff, and student work ethic and orderliness. Two additional subscales on the staff survey assessed teacher burnout and teacher efficacy.

The major findings reported by Pas et al., (2010) were the percent of students in the classroom who received the dependent variable was significant in predicting each outcome, which means that for students who were in classrooms with high referral rates, were more likely to be referred for services or disciplinary actions. The first research question posed was will low teacher efficacy and high burnout be associated with increased utilization of school-based services and disciplinary actions over the course of the school year was not supported in the study. The second research question posed was will there be an interaction between teacher efficacy and burnout that is associated with greatest need for outside assistance was supported in their study, which is opposite of what the researchers expected to find. The third research question posed was will teachers with less teaching experience in schools with poor organizational health be more likely to refer students for academic support or disciplinary action was not supported by the data.

According to Pas et al.,(2010), future research should examine the extent to which teachers' emotional function or mental health status influence teachers' use of discipline referrals and student support services. Additionally, future research should explore potential interactions between positive behavior

intervention systems (PBIS) and teacher characteristics such as burnout or efficacy.

Limitations to the study included a lack of generalizability as this study was limited to elementary schools in one state. Additional limitations included not using random sampling, voluntary teacher participation, and the lack of causality based on the data.

Summary of the Literature Reviewed

In summary, special education teachers are leaving the teaching profession for a variety of reasons including factors associated with teacher attrition, teachers educated through alternative certification programs, how programs within schools are funding special education, and factors associated with teacher burnout. Other areas learned about through researching special education attrition rates were perceived levels of administrative support, workloads, and caseload management and size.

Areas of new interest that will be relevant to adding to the body of literature will be considering different educational settings, including elementary or secondary settings, to determine if there is a significant difference between levels that would negatively impact teacher attrition rates. Understanding potential possibilities of special education attrition rates could lead to improved hiring practices that result in less turnover, reduced costs of teacher replacement, and finally, improved successes for special education students.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will review the purpose of this study as well as the methodology and research questions. The methodology will include instrument questions, data analysis techniques, setting of the study, and information about the participants. Finally, I will review the limitations of the study along with any potential researcher biases and how these may impact the study.

This research study was a quantitative research study that used a survey instrument to gather responses from participants to compare novice teachers to experienced teachers, elementary to secondary settings, and factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates.

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

This quantitative research study was utilized to gain insights from respondents about the topic of special education teacher attrition rates from special education teachers in a large school district in southern California. The purpose of the study was to examine the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates in a school district in southern California and compare elementary school settings with secondary school settings on the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates. The participants in this study were special education teachers employed by a large school district in southern California.

The importance of this research was to add to the existing literature on special education teacher attrition rates and expand the research with comparing different educational settings to see if there was a difference in what impacts special education teachers to leave the profession. The research questions are:

RQ 1: What, if any, were the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates in elementary settings versus secondary settings in a southern California school district?

RQ 2: What, if any, were the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates from beginning teachers and veteran teachers in elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?

RQ 3: What, if any, were the most significant factors that influence Special education teachers to leave the profession within the elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?

Methodology

This study sought to examine the factors associated with special education attrition rates in a school district in southern California and compare elementary school settings with secondary school settings on the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates. This study sought to gain insights of participants on why they felt the need to leave their current special education teacher assignments and what factors would address their concerns to reduce special education teacher attrition rates. The study used a quantitative approach using survey research methods.

Research Methods

To respond to the research questions, a quantitative research survey entitled "Special Education Teacher Attrition Survey" was utilized. Surveys were sent to all staff in the school district with a goggle forms link for participants to take the survey electronically. Participation was voluntary. No collection of participants private information was used. The survey was conducted for two weeks, with a follow up reminder sent halfway through the week reminding participants to take the survey if they had not already done so.

Instrumentation

The Special Education Teacher Attrition Survey was used to gather information about special education teachers' thoughts on whether they were contemplating leaving their current teaching position along with identifying factors associated with leaving.

Of the 19 questions, 11 of the questions are based on a four-point Likert scale to have participants respond to their level of agreement from strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. One question was answered with a yes or no, if the participant was considering leaving the teaching profession. One question was asking participants to check the factors that were associated with them deciding to leave the profession. The remaining six questions were related to demographics such as age, ethnicity, primary school level, highest level of education, where they obtained their educational training, and their level

of experience being a special education teacher. The survey was created

electronically within goggle forms.

Special Education Teacher Attrition Survey

<u>Special Education Teacher Attrition Survey</u>

For questions 1-12, questions, please select only one answer. Your answers will be confidential and only portrayed in the aggregate.

1. My educational experience prepared me to meet the academic needs of the students I teach.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

2. My educational experience included preparation to teach in schools with high populations of students of color.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

3. I was prepared to teach in a culturally diverse classroom.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

4. The teaching profession was consistent with my expectations and dreams.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

5. I enjoy working with children.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

6. I have a strong working relationship with my colleagues.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

7. I feel supported by my site administration.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

8. I feel supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

9. My expectation of the teaching profession did fit the actual reality of the classroom.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

10. The workload of the special education teacher job description was accurate.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

11. Are you currently considering leaving the teaching profession?

o Yes	o No

12. If you are considering resigning, would you consider returning to the teaching profession a future option?

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

For the next question, please check all that apply.

13. The factors that contribute to my decisions to possibly leave the teaching profession are?

o Administrative Support	o Lack of Student Discipline	o Disrespect from Students	o Disrespect from Parents
o Salary	o Benefits	o Job Duties	o Health Considerations

Demographics

14. What is your age? _____

15. What is your ethnicity?

      a. White
      b. African American
      c. Hispanic
      d. Asian
      e. Other
      f. Prefer not to say

16. What is your primary school level? (Select (X) one)

      a. Elementary Setting: K – 2nd grades ___
      b. Elementary Setting: 3rd – 5th grades ___
      c. Secondary Setting: 6th – 8th grades ___
      d. Secondary Setting: 9th – 12th grades ___

17. What is your highest level of education? (Check one)

      a. Bachelor's Degree ___
      b. Master's Degree   ___
      c. Doctoral Degree   ___

18. Where did you receive your educational training that prepared you to teach students with disabilities? (Check one)

      a. University setting ___
      b. Alternative Certification Program ___

19. What level of experience do you have as a Special Education Teacher?

      a. New Teacher (less than one full year)

      b. First Year Teacher (one full year, but less than two full years)

      c. Second Year Teacher (more than two full years, but less than three years)

      d. Third Year Teacher (more than three full years of teaching experience)

Thank you for completing the survey. Please click the submit button.

Data Collection

Participants were selected based on working for a large school district in southern California as special education teachers during the 2022-2023 school years. Participation was voluntary, all information was anonymous, and all data was shared in aggregate form only.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics and an independent t-test were utilized to analyze the data. According to Field (2018), descriptive statistics describes the characteristics of a data set using measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode), measures of variability, and frequency distributions. Field (2018) states that you use this test when you want to compare two means that come

from conditions consisting of different entities. In this research, comparing the different settings, elementary versus secondary settings, on their attrition rates will look for differences between the groups. A *t*-test was used to compare the different groups and responses where the null hypothesis should be there are no differences between groups while the alternative should be there are differences between the groups.

<div align="center">Validity and Reliability</div>

According to Field (2018), validity is a measure to determine if an instrument measures what is sets out to measure. Content validity assess the degree to which individual items represent the construct being measured and cover the full range of the construct (Field, 2018). In the current research, content validity was assessed during the pilot study with the committee consisting of professionals. The pilot study was used to address the validity and reliability of the survey instrument. Reliability, according to Field (2018) is when an instrument can be interpreted consistently across different situations. After the pilot study, modifications to the instrument may occur to increase the instruments validity and reliability.

Table 3 describes the research questions and survey questions alignment to ensure that all questions being looked at are identified before research is conducted to prevent post-survey regret or finding there were no data collected to answer the research question. (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. No Regrets Table

	RQ 1: What, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates in elementary settings versus secondary settings in a southern California school district?	RQ 2: What, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates from beginning teachers and veteran teachers in elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?	RQ 3: What, if any, are the most significant factors that influence Special education teachers to leave the profession within the elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?
1. My educational experience prepared me to meet the academic needs of the students I teach.	X	X	X
2. My educational experience included preparation to teach in schools with high populations of students of color.	X	X	X
3. I was prepared to	X	X	X

teach in a culturally diverse classroom.			
4. The teaching profession was consistent with my expectations and dreams.	X	X	X
5. I enjoy working with children.			x
6. I have a strong working relationship with my colleagues.	X	X	X
7. I feel supported by my site administration.	X	X	X
8. I feel supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office.	X	X	X
9. My expectation of the teaching profession did fit the actual reality of the classroom.	X	X	X

10. The workload of the special education teacher job description was accurate.	X	X	X
11. Are you currently considering leaving the teaching profession?	X	X	
12. If you are considering resigning, would you consider returning to the teaching profession a future option?	X	X	
13. The factors that contribute to my decisions to possibly leave the teaching profession are?			X
14. What is your age?			
15. What is your ethnicity?			
16. What is your primary school level?	X	X	X

17. What is your highest level of education?	X	X	X
18. Where did you receive your educational training that prepared you to teach students with disabilities?	X	X	X
19. What level of experience do you have as a Special Education Teacher?	X	X	X

Summary

The next section will address the results of the research study. It will include descriptive statistics, analyses of the data between groups, and a comparing of means to determine if there was difference between special education teachers' attrition rates between elementary and secondary settings.

CHAPTER FOUR:
RESULTS

Introduction

This quantitative research study sought to examine the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates in a school district in southern

California and compared those factors between elementary school settings and secondary school settings on the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates. The three research questions that guided the study were as follows: (1) What, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates in elementary settings versus secondary settings in a southern California school district?; (2) What, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates from beginning teachers and veteran teachers in elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?; (3) What, if any, are the most significant factors that influence Special Education Teachers to leave the profession within the elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district? This study was not set up to be generalized to all special education teacher attrition rates, rather, it was set up to understand how a special education teacher in a school district in southern California view leaving the teaching profession.

Description of Participants

All participants were special education teachers in a large school district in southern California. Participation was voluntary and personal or identifiable information was not obtained. Participants job descriptions ranged from early elementary to high school.

Data Collection and Methodology

An electronic survey was sent out to the entire school district using Peachjar. Peachjar is an online program that allows users to share documents electronically, reducing the use of paper. Peachjar was required to be used by the school district. A document was sent to all teachers requesting their participation using goggle forms. The document was approved by the director of State and Federal programs at the district and was emailed out to the entire district. The survey was open for two weeks. Halfway through the two weeks, a reminder email was sent asking for participants that had not participated to consider participating. All data was collected using goggle forms. As the document was sent out to all teachers, the researcher identified from the survey the special education teachers by utilizing question 19. Only special education teachers were utilized for the research leaving forty-two participants (n = 42).

Data Analysis

Due to the low number of elementary special education teachers, inferential statistics were used to summarize data in percentages.

Demographics

All participants voluntarily completed the electronic survey that was sent with an approval letter from the director of Federal and State programs. Participants personal information was not recorded in any form and all entries were completely anonymous.

Participants were asked their current primary school level. Participants were given four choices: (1) K-2 grade, (2) 3-5, (3) 6-8, or (9-12) (see Table 4).

Table 4

Percentage of Participants Teaching Levels

	% Elementary School		% Secondary School
K-2	13.3	6-8	40.7
3-5	86.6	9-12	59.3

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school). N = 27 (Secondary school). Participants on average were 48.3 years old.

The elementary special education teacher responses from K-2 were small, (n = 3), with four times more elementary teachers reporting from grades 3-5 (n = 12). The number of secondary teacher responses was larger than elementary, (n = 27). The number of participants from grades 6-8 were (n = 11) and from grades 9-12 were (16).

Participants were asked to identify their highest level of education. Three choices were presented which were: (1) bachelor's degree, (2) master's degree, and (3) Doctoral degree (see Table 5).

Table 5

Percentage of Participants Highest Level of Education.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Bachelor's Degree	13.3	6.7	4.0	4.0

Table 5 Continued

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Master's Degree	6.7	13.3	20.0	56.0
Doctoral Degree	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School)

Most teachers reported having a master's degree. More participants reporting higher levels of education in the secondary settings over the elementary setting. Four participants in the secondary setting reported having an advanced degree of Doctorate, while no elementary teachers reported having this level of education. A difference between elementary and secondary veteran teachers was seen based on educational attainment where only 13.3% had a master's degree whereas 56.0% of secondary veteran teachers having a master's degree.

Participants were asked to identify where they obtained their educational training that prepared them to teach students with disabilities (see Table 6).

Table 6

Percentage of Participants Responses about where they received their Educational Training.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
University Setting	6.7	80	24.0	68.0
Alternative Setting	13.3	0.0	0.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School)

Elementary teachers and secondary teachers were overwhelming trained in a university setting. Elementary veteran teachers reported being trained in a university setting at 80.0% as compared to 68.0% of secondary veteran teachers. Elementary novice teachers reported being trained in a university setting at 6.7% as compared to secondary novice teachers at 24.0%. An area of caution was the lack of novice teachers at the secondary setting in an alternative setting (0.0%) as compared to elementary novice teachers at (13.3%).

Participants were asked to identify what level of experience do you have as a special education teacher (see Table 7).

Table 7

Percentage of Participants Years of Experience as a Special Education Teacher.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	%Novice	% Veteran
0-1 Year	0.0	0.0	8.0	0.0
1-2 Years	6.7	0.0	12.0	0.0
2-3 Years	13.3	0.0	4.0	0.0

Table 7 Continued

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
3 or more years	0.0	80.0	0.0	76.0

Note: Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School)

Veteran special education teachers at both the elementary and secondary settings responded to the survey at higher rates than novice teachers. Novice teachers responded (n = 9) as compared to veteran teachers (n = 31).

The following sections of this chapter present and analyze the data collected and is organized by research question.

Research Question 1: What, if any, are the differences in Special Education Teacher attrition rates in elementary settings and secondary settings in a southern California school district?

Special Education Teachers were defined as teachers who work with students who have Individual Education Plans (IEP's). Elementary school teachers were defined as teachers teaching grade levels from kindergarten to fifth grade. Secondary school teachers were defined as teaches teaching grade levels from sixth grade to twelfth grade. The question of whether a teacher was considering leaving the teaching profession was used to measure special education teacher attrition rates. According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) small changes in teacher attrition rates have large impacts on teacher labor markets that already have challenges of filling special education teacher positions. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) defined special education attrition as special education teachers that chose to leave the profession for another site or position, changing from special education to regular

education, or leaving the profession completely. These definitions were like how Stock and Carriere (2021), Williams and Dikes (2017). Pas et al., (2010), and Hughes et al., (2015) defined teacher attrition rates.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: My educational experience prepared me to meet the academic needs of the students I teach? (see Table 8).

Table 8

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about Educational Experiences preparing them for the Academic needs of Students they Teach.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	%Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	11.1	16.7	22.2	19.0
Agree	0.0	50.0	11.1	42.9
Disagree	11.1	33.3	33.3	28.6
Strongly Disagree	11.1			9.50

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School)

The results of the survey indicate that novice teachers in secondary schools are reporting that their educational experiences have not prepared them to meet the needs of the students that they teach. What is notable is that at the elementary level, 33.3% of veteran teachers as compared to 22.2% of novice teachers felt their educational experiences did not adequately prepare them to meet the needs of their students.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: My educational experiences included preparation to teach in schools with high populations of students of color? (see Table 9).

Table 9

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about Educational Experiences including Preparation to Teach in Schools with High Populations of Color.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	%Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	0.0	13.3	4.0	16.0
Agree	6.7	33.3	16.0	20.0
Disagree	0.0	33.3	4.0	32.0
Strongly Disagree	13.3	0.0	8.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School)

The results of the survey indicated that novice teachers in elementary schools are reporting that their educational experiences did not prepare them to teach in schools with high populations of students with color. Elementary novice teachers (13.3%) disagreed as compared to novice elementary teachers (6.7%) that agreed. This contrasts with novice teachers in secondary settings who reported agreement in that their educational experiences prepared them to teach in schools with high populations of color. However, 40% of secondary veteran teachers did not believe they were adequately prepared.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I was prepared to teach in a culturally diverse classroom? (see Table 10).

Table 10

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about being Prepared to Teach in Culturally Diverse Classrooms.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	13.3	4.0	12.0
Agree	6.7	53.3	16.0	36.0
Disagree	0.0	13.3	4.0	20.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	0.0	0.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School)

The results of the survey indicated that both elementary and secondary teachers reported feeling prepared to teach in culturally diverse classrooms. Elementary novice teachers (13.4%) reported and elementary veteran teachers (66.6%) reported that they believe they were prepared to teach in a culturally diverse classroom. Similarly, secondary novice teachers (20.0%) reported and secondary veteran teachers (48.0%) reported that they believe that they were prepared to teach in a culturally diverse classroom.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: The teaching profession was consistent with my expectations and dreams? (see Table 11).

Table 11

Percentage of Special Education Teachers responses about the Teaching Profession Matching Expectations and Dreams.

| | Elementary School | | Secondary School | |
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	4.0	12.0
Agree	6.7	60.0	12.0	28.0
Disagree	0.0	6.7	4.0	20.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	13.3	4.0	16.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School)

The results of this question indicated that both elementary and secondary special education teachers reported feeling that the teaching profession was consistent with their expectations and dreams. Elementary novice teachers (13.4%) agreed that the teaching profession matched their expectations and dreams while (6.7%) of elementary teachers disagreed. Elementary veteran teachers (60.0%) agreed the teaching profession matched their expectations and dreams while (20.0%) disagreed. This finding could be interpreted as more teachers feel that the teaching profession was consistent with their expectations and dreams. Similarly, secondary novice teachers (16.0%) agreed and (8.0%) disagreed while secondary veteran teachers (40.0%) agreed and (36.0%) disagreed meaning more veteran teachers felt that teaching may not be matching the expectations and dreams.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I have a strong working relationship with my colleagues? (see Table 12).

Table 12

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about having a Strong Working Relationship with their Colleagues.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	20.0	46.7	8.0	20.0
Agree	0.0	33.3	12.0	36.0
Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School)

The results indicated that both elementary and secondary Special Education Teachers reported feeling that they had strong working relationships with colleagues. Elementary novice teachers agreed (20.0%) while (80.0%) of elementary veteran teachers agreed with no teachers disagreeing. Secondary novice teachers (20.0%) reported agreeing to having a strong working relationship with colleagues while secondary veteran teachers (56.0%) reported they agreed. A difference was noted between the secondary veteran teachers disagreeing at 24.0% versus elementary veteran teachers disagreeing at 0.0%.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I feel supported by my site administration? (see Table 13).

Table 13

Percentage of Special Education Teacher responses about feeling supported by their site administration.

| | Elementary School | | Secondary School | |
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	13.3	33.3	0.0	16.0
Agree	0.0	26.7	12.0	28.0
Disagree	6.7	13.3	8.0	12.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	6.6	4.0	20.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School)

The results indicated that veteran teachers reported feeling less supported by their site administration than was reported by novice teachers. Secondary veteran teachers (32.0%) disagreed versus 19.9% of elementary veteran teachers who disagreed. Additionally, there was a difference in how teachers felt supported by their site administration. Elementary veteran teachers (60.0%) agreed while 44.0% of secondary veteran teachers agreed they felt supported by the site administration.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I feel supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office? (see Table 14).

Table 14

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about Feeling Supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office.

Table 14 Continued

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	13.3	6.7	0.0	4.0
Agree	6.7	20.0	16.0	24.0
Disagree	0.0	40	8.0	16.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	13.3	0.0	32.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

The results indicated that there was a difference between novice and veteran teachers on their view of the Special Education Department at the District Office. Veteran teachers in both elementary and secondary settings were notably higher in their disagreement than were novice teachers. When looking at combining strongly disagree and disagree scores, 53.3% of veteran elementary and 48.0% of veteran secondary Special Education Teachers reported not feeling supported by the Special Education Department Office at the District level.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: My expectations of the teaching profession did fit the actual reality of the classroom (see Table 15).

Table 15

Percentage of Special Education Teacher responses about Expectations of the Teaching Profession meeting the Actual Reality of the Classroom.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran

Table 15 Continued

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	4.0	4.0
Agree	6.7	26.7	8.0	28.0
Disagree	0.0	40	8.0	36.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	13.3	4.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

The results indicated that there was a difference between veteran teachers and novice teachers when determining if the teaching profession did fit the reality of the classroom. Elementary veteran teachers (66.7%) reported disagreement as compared to secondary veteran teachers (40.0%) reported when the disagreed.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: The workload of the special education teacher job description was accurate? (see Table 16).

Table 16

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses on the Workload of the Special Education Teacher Job Description was Accurate.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	0.0	4.0
Agree	0.0	13.3	8.0	4.0
Disagree	6.7	40.0	16.0	36.0

Table 16 Continued

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Disagree	6.7	26.7	0.0	32.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

The results indicated that there was only a slight difference in how teachers viewed the job description for a special education teacher. Elementary veteran teachers (66.0%) disagreed while 68.0% of secondary veteran teachers disagreed. Veteran teachers clearly felt that the job description of a special education teacher was not accurate.

Participants were asked to answer the following question: Are you currently considering leaving the teaching profession? (see Table 17).

Table 17

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses on if They are Considering Leaving the Teaching Profession.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Yes	6.7	33.3	8.0	36.0
No	13.3	46.6	16.0	40.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

The differences between novice and veteran teachers across both the elementary and secondary schools were notable. Novice teachers from both

elementary and secondary settings (14.7%) were considering leaving while

veteran teachers from both elementary and secondary settings (69.3%) were

considering leaving. It would appear based on these data, that veteran teachers

are considering leaving the teaching profession at a much higher rate than

novice teachers.

Participants were asked to answer the following question: If you were

considering resigning, would you consider returning to the teaching profession a

future option? (see Table 18).

Table 18

Percentage of Teachers that would Consider Returning to the Teaching
Profession a Future Option.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Yes	8.3	75.0	61.1	50.0
No	8.3	8.3	38.9	27.7

Note: N = 12 (Elementary school) and N = 18 (Secondary School). Three

elementary participants and seven secondary participants failed to answer this

question.

The differences in responses between novice and secondary teachers

was visibly different. Elementary veteran teachers (75.0%) would reconsider

returning to the teaching profession whereas only 50.0% of the secondary

teachers would reconsider returning to the teaching profession. A larger

difference was noted between veteran secondary teachers over veteran elementary school teachers on who would not reconsider returning the teaching profession. Secondary veteran teachers (27.7%) would not reconsider compared to (8.3%) of elementary veteran teachers. This difference was over three times more not reconsidering returning to the teaching profession. Additionally, secondary novice teachers (38.9%) were not interested in returning over 8.3% of the elementary veteran teachers. This difference was nearly five times greater.

Research question 2: What, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates from beginning teachers and veteran teachers in elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer how their educational experience prepared them to meet the academic needs of the students they teach (see Table 19).

Table 19

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about Educational Experiences Preparing them for the Academic needs of Students they Teach.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	%Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	11.1	16.7	22.2	19.0
Agree	0.0	50.0	11.1	42.9
Disagree	11.1	33.3	33.3	28.6
Strongly Disagree	11.1			9.50

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

Teachers' perceptions of how well prepared they are to work with their students may impact their beliefs of how effective they are as a teacher. According to Pas et al., 2010, low teacher efficacy were negative beliefs about a teacher's ability to instruct students. Teachers viewed student failures as their failures. When teachers have high teacher efficacy, teachers are better at creating good instruction, are more initiative-taking and have better classroom management along with higher student achievement. The difference between novice and elementary teachers is noticeable with novice teachers (11.1%) reporting agreement that they felt prepared by their educational program versus veteran teachers (66.7%) reporting that they felt prepared by their educational program. When investigating the differences in teachers that disagreed, 22.2% of novice teachers reported that they did not feel prepared by their educational program as compared to 33.3% of veteran teachers who reported that they did not feel prepared by their educational program.

The differences between the secondary novice teachers and the veteran teachers were noticeable. Novice teachers (33.3%) reported feeling prepared compared to 61.9% of veteran teachers. The differences between disagreement between the two groups was much smaller. Novice teachers (33.3%) disagreed with feeling prepared by their educational program compared to (38.1%) of veteran teachers who reported feeling not prepared by their educational program.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer how their educational experience included preparation to teach in schools with high populations of students of color (see Table 20).

Table 20

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about Educational Experiences including Preparation to Teach in Schools with High Populations of Color.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	0.0	13.3	4.0	16.0
Agree	6.6	33.3	16.0	20.0
Disagree	0.0	33.3	4.0	32.0
Strongly Disagree	13.3	0.0	8.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

Schools with high populations of students of color are often staffed by less experienced teachers and teachers that utilized alternative certification programs, are often Title I schools, and have higher rates of teacher attrition (70%) (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Understanding how to work with a diverse population could impact teachers' decisions to remain or leave a position. Elementary novice teachers reported that their educational experience prepared them to teach in schools with high populations of color in different ways. Elementary novice teachers (6.6%) agreed that their training prepared them while (13.3%) reported disagreement in that their programs did not prepare them. Secondary teachers had even larger gaps. Veteran teachers (40.0%) disagreed

they were prepared while only (12.0%) of novice teachers reported

disagreement. Veteran teachers (36.0%) agreed that their educational

experiences prepared them to work in schools with high populations of students

of color versus 20% of novice teachers.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer how prepared they

were to teach in a culturally diverse classroom (see Table 21).

Table 21

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about being Prepared to
Teach in Culturally Diverse Classrooms.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	13.3	4.0	12.0
Agree	6.7	53.3	16.0	36.0
Disagree	0.0	13.3	4.0	20.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	0.0	0.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

The elementary novice teachers (13.4%) that agreed was twice as high as

those that disagreed (6.7%). When comparing the secondary novice teachers,

the differences were even larger with 20.0% in agreement and only 4.0% in

disagreement. The larger differences were between the veteran elementary

school teachers. Veteran elementary teachers (66.6%) agreed that they felt

prepared to teach in a culturally diverse classroom as compared to 4.0% that

disagreed. The secondary veteran teachers also had a similar difference, with 48.0% in agreement as compared to 28.0% in disagreement.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: The teaching profession was consistent with my expectations and dreams? (see Table 22).

Table 22

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about the Teaching Profession matching Expectations and Dreams.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	4.0	12.0
Agree	6.7	60.0	12.0	28.0
Disagree	0.0	6.7	4.0	20.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	13.3	4.0	16.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

Novice elementary teachers (13.4%) and novice secondary teachers (16.0%) agreed that the teaching profession was consistent with their expectations and dreams. Novice elementary teachers (6.7%) and novice secondary teachers (8.0%) disagreed that the teaching profession was consistent with their expectations and dreams. A much larger similarity between agreement of elementary veteran teachers (60.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (40.0%) that the teaching profession was consistent with their expectations and dreams compared to the disagreement between elementary

veteran teachers (20.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (36.0%). This difference could indicate why more veteran teachers are thinking about leaving the teaching profession.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I have a strong working relationship with my colleagues? (see Table 23).

Table 23

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about having a Strong Working Relationship with their Colleagues.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	20.0	46.7	8.0	20.0
Agree	0.0	33.3	12.0	36.0
Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School).

Strong work relationships with colleagues could impact how supported teachers feel. Teachers that feel supported tend to stay in their current positions where teachers that do not tend to leave. According to Bettini et al., (2020) administrators that can understand the demands of special education teachers and improve meeting special education teacher requests in demands, planning time, and social supports, improve their chances of reducing the attrition rates of the special education teacher. In table 20, veteran elementary teachers (80.0%)

indicated that they had strong working relationships with colleagues compared to secondary veteran teachers (56%), which could mean elementary teachers do have stronger relationships than secondary teachers.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I feel supported by my site administration? (see Table 24).

Table 24

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about Feeling Supported by their Site Administration.

| | Elementary School | | Secondary School | |
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	13.3	33.3	0.0	16.0
Agree	0.0	26.7	12.0	28.0
Disagree	6.7	13.3	8.0	12.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	6.6	4.0	20.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School).

Administrative support was a highly correlated with reducing special education teacher attrition rates. According to Hughes and O'Reilly (2015), administrative support was positively correlated with reduced teacher attrition rates for special education teachers. Table 21 indicated that elementary novice teachers (13.3%) reported being supported by site administration while secondary novice teachers (12.0%) reported being supported by site administration. Secondary veteran teachers (60%) agreed to having support from site administration while 44.0% of secondary veteran teachers agreed to having

support from site administration. Conversely, elementary novice teachers (6.7%) and secondary novice teachers (12.0%) reported disagreement and not feeling supported by site administration. Elementary veteran teachers (19.9%) and secondary veteran teachers (32.0%) reported disagreement and not feeling supported by site administration. This finding may be one reason secondary veteran teachers are considering leaving the teaching profession at higher rates than the other groups.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I feel supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office? (see Table 25).

Table 25

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about Feeling Supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	13.3	6.7	0.0	4.0
Agree	6.7	20.0	16.0	24.0
Disagree	0.0	40	8.0	16.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	13.3	0.0	32.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School).

Sayman et al., (2018) reported that forty-nine out of fifty-one states report difficulties in finding, hiring, and retaining highly qualified special education teachers. In addition, when districts hire less qualified teachers and attempt to

support them in the classroom, it often leads to higher attrition rates. District implemented coaching and training programs should improve how teachers feel about the district office. According to Table 22, elementary novice teachers (20.0%) and secondary novice teachers (16.0%) reported agreement in feeling supported by the district office. Elementary veteran teachers (26.7%) and secondary veteran teachers (28.0%) agreed in feeling supported by the district office. Conversely, a much larger difference was noted between novice and veteran teachers in disagreement to feeling supported by the district office. Elementary novice teachers (0.00%) and secondary novice teachers (8.0%) reported disagreement in feeling supported by the district office whereas elementary veteran teachers (53.3%) and secondary veteran teachers (48.0%) reported disagreement in feeling supported by the district office.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: My expectations of the teaching profession did fit the actual reality of the classroom (see Table 26).

Table 26

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about Expectations of the Teaching Profession meeting the Actual Reality of the Classroom.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	4.0	4.0
Agree	6.7	26.7	8.0	28.0

Table 26 Continued

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Disagree	0.0	40	8.0	36.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	13.3	4.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School).

Williams and Dikes (2015) reported that attrition rates for special education teachers was 13.0%, which was double that of regular education teachers. The job of a special education teacher may not meet the expectations of the teaching profession in the actual classroom environment causing more special education teachers choosing to leave the profession. Table 23, there was a large difference between elementary and secondary settings across novice and veteran teachers. Elementary novice teachers (6.7%) and secondary novice teachers (12.0%) reported disagreement that the expectations of the teaching profession do not match the classroom. This finding was much lower than the veteran teachers. Elementary veteran teachers (53.3%) and secondary veteran teachers (44.0%) reported disagreement that the expectations of the teaching profession do not match the classroom.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: The workload of the special education teacher job description was accurate? (see Table 27).

Table 27

Table 27 Continued

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses on the Workload of the Special Education Teacher Job Description was Accurate.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	0.0	4.0
Agree	0.0	13.3	8.0	4.0
Disagree	6.7	40.0	16.0	36.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	26.7	0.0	32.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School).

Understanding the demands of the job may be a critical factor in ensuring teachers feel competent, comfortable, and willing to take on the job of a special education teacher. Williams and Dikes (2015) reported that high levels of job stress increased teachers' emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA), all lead to higher special education teacher attrition rates. In Table 24, it is very clear that the workload of the special education teachers job description was accurate is incorrect. Both novice and veteran teachers reported higher results that the workload of the special education teacher was incorrect over those teachers that agreed the workload of the special education teacher was correct. Elementary novice teachers (13.4%) and secondary novice teachers (16.0%) along with elementary veteran teachers (66.7%) and secondary veteran teachers (68.0%) all agreed that the workload of the special education teacher job description was incorrect. This finding could

mean that special education teachers in all areas are feeling overwhelmed,

overworked, over stressed, and in need of more supports.

Participants were asked to answer the following question: Are you

currently considering leaving the teaching profession? (see Table 28).

Table 28

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses on if they are Considering
Leaving the Teaching Profession.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Yes	6.7	33.3	8.0	36.0
No	13.3	46.6	16.0	40.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School).

Stock and Carriere (2021) reported that the costs to replace teachers in

the United States is near 8 billion dollars a year. When teachers begin to feel

burned out, exhausted, frustrated, or disrespected, they begin to think about

leaving their position. Table 25 indicates that elementary novice teachers (6.7%)

and secondary novice teachers (8.0%) are considering leaving the teaching

profession. In addition, elementary veteran teachers (33.3%) and secondary

veteran teachers (36.0%) are considering leaving the teaching profession. The

reasons for wanting to leave need to be better understood to reduce the amount

of special education teacher attrition.

Participants were asked to answer the following question: If you were considering resigning, would you consider returning to the teaching profession a future option? (see Table 29).

Table 29

Percentage of Teachers that would Consider Returning to the Teaching Profession a Future Option.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Yes	8.3	75.0	11.1	50.0
No	8.3	8.3	11.1	27.7

Note: N = 12 (Elementary school) and N = 18 (Secondary School). Three elementary participants and seven secondary participants failed to answer this question.

Elementary novice teachers (8.3%) and secondary novice teachers (11.1%) reported that if they were leaving the teaching profession, would returning to the teaching profession be an option, and they are saying no. Our newest teachers are reporting an unwillingness to return to teaching, which directly impacts special education attrition rates. In addition to our newest teachers not wanting to return, elementary veteran teachers (8.3%) and secondary veteran teachers (27.7%) are reporting not wanting to return to teaching as an option either. The members not wanting to return could be increasing teacher attrition rates and making it harder to find highly qualified teachers to improve student outcomes. Additionally, there was a noticeable

difference from elementary veteran teachers (75.0%) willing to return and secondary veteran teachers (50.0%) willing to return. This drop in secondary veteran teachers should be explored.

Research question 3: What, if any, are the most significant factors that influence special education teachers to leave the profession within the elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district?

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer how their educational experience prepared them to meet the academic needs of the students they teach (see Table 30).

Table 30

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about Educational Experiences Preparing them for the Academic Needs of Students they Teach.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	%Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	11.1	16.7	22.2	19.0
Agree	0.0	50.0	11.1	42.9
Disagree	11.1	33.3	33.3	28.6
Strongly Disagree	11.1			9.50

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

According to Carver-Thomas et al., (2019), one factor considered by teachers are the subjects taught. Math and Science teachers in Title 1 schools leave at a higher rate than non-Title 1 schools. Carver-Thomas et al., (2019) noticed that the higher the percentage of students of color is correlated with

higher special education teacher attrition rates (14.2%). Teachers that were

taught in alternative educational settings had higher rates of attrition (11.0%)

versus special education teacher rates of attrition (20.0%) (Carver-Thomas &

Darling-Hammond, 2019). Special education teachers that report that their

educational experiences prepared them for the academic needs of students that

they teach may affect attrition rates. Table 27 above shows elementary novice

teachers (22.2%) and secondary novice teachers (33.3%) reported disagreement

in feeling prepared.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer how their

educational experience included preparation to teach in schools with high

populations of students of color (see Table 31).

Table 31

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about Educational
Experiences including Preparation to Teach in Schools with High Populations of
Color.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	0.0	13.3	4.0	16.0
Agree	6.6	33.3	16.0	20.0
Disagree	0.0	33.3	4.0	32.0
Strongly Disagree	13.3	0.0	8.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

Title-I schools have 50.0% greater turnover than non-Title I schools (Carver-Thomas et al., 2019). According to Carver-Thomas et al., (2019), Title-I schools have turnover rates near 70% in math and science. Most Title-I schools report having higher percentages of staff trained through alternative methods working with students with diverse needs and backgrounds. As much as 80.0% of teachers trained in alternative certification programs leave their job (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Table 28 above shows in this study elementary novice teachers (13.3%) and secondary novice teachers (12.0%) disagreed that their educational experience included preparation to teach in schools with high populations of students with color. Elementary veteran teachers (33.3%) and secondary veteran teachers (40.0%) also reported disagreement that their educational experience included preparation to teach in schools with high populations of students of color.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer how prepared they were to teach in a culturally diverse classroom (see Table 32).

Table 32

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about being Prepared to Teach in Culturally Diverse Classrooms.

| | Elementary School | | Secondary School | |
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	13.3	4.0	12.0
Agree	6.7	53.3	16.0	36.0
Disagree	0.0	13.3	4.0	20.0

Table 32 Continued

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Disagree	6.7	0.0	0.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School).

According to Williams and Dikes (2015), special education teachers in urban and rural populations are often asked to work with a student population that they are not adequately prepared to teach. Not being adequately prepared causes higher rates of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. These factors may impact attrition rates. Table 29 above shows elementary novice teachers (13.4%) and secondary novice teachers (20.0%) in this study agreed that they were prepared to teach in culturally diverse classrooms as compared to (6.7%) and (4.0%) who disagreed, respectively. Elementary veteran teachers (66.6%) and secondary veteran teachers (48.0%) agreed that they were prepared to teach in culturally diverse classrooms as compared to (13.3%) and (28.0%) who disagreed, respectively. Of note is the difference between the elementary veteran teachers and secondary veteran teachers on their disagreement (14.7%) that they were prepared to teach in culturally diverse classrooms with more secondary teachers feeling unprepared.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: The teaching profession was consistent with my expectations and dreams? (see Table 33).

Table 33

Percentage of Special Education Teachers Responses about the Teaching Profession Matching Expectations and Dreams.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	4.0	12.0
Agree	6.7	60.0	12.0	28.0
Disagree	0.0	6.7	4.0	20.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	13.3	4.0	16.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School)

Special education teachers are high demand and sought after by school districts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2020). Elementary novice teachers (13.4%) and secondary novice teachers (20.0%) agreed that the teaching profession matched their expectations and dreams. Similarly, elementary veteran teachers (60.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (40.0%) agreed that the teaching profession matched their expectations and dreams. Conversely, elementary novice teachers (6.7%) and secondary novice teachers (8.0%) disagreed that teaching matched their expectations and dreams. Elementary veteran teachers (20.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (36.0%) disagreed that teaching matched their expectations and dreams. The difference between the veteran teachers agreeing and disagree was large and should be further investigated.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I enjoy working with children (see Table 34).

Table 34

I Enjoy Working with Children.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	20.0	80.0	8.0	60.0
Agree	0.0	0.0	16.0	16.0
Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School) . Two Secondary Teachers did not answer this question.

Elementary novice teachers (20.0%) and elementary veteran teachers (80.0%) agreed that they like working with children. Similarly, secondary novice teachers (24.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (76.0%) agreed that they like working with children.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I have a strong working relationship with my colleagues? (see Table 35).

Table 35

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about having a Strong Working Relationship with their Colleagues.

Table 35 Continued

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	20.0	46.7	8.0	20.0
Agree	0.0	33.3	12.0	36.0
Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School)

Feeling accepted, having a sense of belonging, and being supported are all factors associated with reducing attrition rates (Bettini et al., 2020). Having strong working relationships with colleagues allows for feeling accepted, a sense of belonging, and supported. Elementary novice teachers (20.0) and elementary veteran teachers (80.0%) agreed that they have strong working relationships with their colleagues. Secondary novice teachers (20.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (56.0%) agreed that they had strong working relationships with their colleagues. Of note, both elementary novice and veteran teachers reported (0.0%) in disagreement that they have strong working relationships with colleagues as compared to (24.0%) of the secondary veteran teachers.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I feel supported by my site administration? (see Table 36).

Table 36

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about Feeling Supported by their Site Administration.

Table 36 Continued

| | Elementary School | | Secondary School | |
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	13.3	33.3	0.0	16.0
Agree	0.0	26.7	12.0	28.0
Disagree	6.7	13.3	8.0	12.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	6.6	4.0	20.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School).

Bettini et al., (2020) outlined the factors associated with special educators' intent to continue teaching students with emotional or behavioral disorders in a self-contained classroom. A specific finding was that of site administrative support. When administrators support the teachers and the teachers reported feeling supported, special education teachers stayed in the current job, but when teachers reported not feeling supported, they left the job. In Table 33, understanding how teachers feel supported could help reducing special education teacher attrition rates. Elementary novice teachers (13.3%) and elementary veteran teachers (60.0%) agreed that they feel supported by their site administration while only 6.7% of elementary novice teachers and 20.0% of elementary veteran teachers disagreed and reported not feeling supported by the site administration. Secondary novice teachers (12.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (44.0%) agreed that they feel supported by their site administration while only 12.0% of secondary novice teachers and 32.0% of secondary veteran teachers disagreed and do not feel supported by their site administration. Of

note, the difference between disagreement of elementary veteran teachers (20.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (32.0%) is a large difference and should be further investigated.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: I feel supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office? (see Table 37).

Table 37

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about Feeling Supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	13.3	6.7	0.0	4.0
Agree	6.7	20.0	16.0	24.0
Disagree	0.0	40.0	8.0	16.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	13.3	0.0	32.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School).

Similarly, to being supported by site administration, feeling supported by the district administration may be a factor that negatively impacts teacher attrition rates. Elementary novice teachers (20.0%) and elementary veteran teachers (26.7%) agreed that they feel supported by the Special Education department at the District Office. Similarly, secondary novice teachers (16.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (28.0%) agreed that they felt supported by the Special Education department at the District Office. In comparison, 0.0% of the

elementary novice teachers and 53.3% of elementary veteran teachers disagreed that they felt supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office. Secondary novice teachers (8.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (48.0%) disagreed that they felt supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office. Of note, the disagreement between the veteran teachers across both the elementary and secondary school levels were large and should be further investigated.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: My expectations of the teaching profession did fit the actual reality of the classroom (see Table 38).

Table 38

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses about Expectations of the Teaching Profession Meeting the Actual Reality of the Classroom.

| | Elementary School | | Secondary School | |
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	4.0	4.0
Agree	6.7	26.7	8.0	28.0
Disagree	0.0	40.0	8.0	36.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	13.3	4.0	8.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 25 (Secondary School)

Teachers not being prepared for what a real classroom may really be like could be another factor that impacts teacher attrition rates. Teachers coming out of the university or alternative certification programs may not being given enough

opportunities to develop their abilities to effectively work with students with disabilities. Pas et al., (2010) reported that low teacher efficacy, or negative beliefs about your own ability to teacher students negatively impacts teacher attrition rates. If teachers do not feel that they are good teachers and their expectations of the classroom are not matching, it could be another factor impacting teacher attrition rates negatively. Elementary novice teachers (13.4%) and elementary veteran teachers (26.7%) agreed their expectation of teaching fit the actual reality of the classroom while 6.7% of elementary novice teachers and 53.3% of veteran teachers disagreed, believing that their expectations of the teaching profession were not matching the actual reality of the classroom. The difference between agreed and disagreed here is large and should be explored.

Similarly, to the elementary setting, the secondary novice teachers (12.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (32.0%) agreed that their perception of the teaching profession matched the actual reality of the classroom. Secondary novice teachers (12.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (44.0%) disagreed that their perception of the teaching profession met the actuality of the classroom environment. Again, the difference between agreed and disagreed was clearly visible and concerning.

Participants were asked to use a Likert scale to answer the following question: The workload of the special education teacher job description was accurate? (see Table 39).

Table 39

Percentage of Special Education Teacher Responses on the Workload of the Special Education Teacher Job Description was Accurate.

| | Elementary School | | Secondary School | |
	% Novice	% Veteran	% Novice	% Veteran
Strongly Agree	6.7	0.0	0.0	4.0
Agree	0.0	13.3	8.0	4.0
Disagree	6.7	40.0	16.0	36.0
Strongly Disagree	6.7	26.7	0.0	32.0

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School)

The workload of a special educator is large across both the elementary and secondary settings. There are external pressures of paperwork, extra meetings, collaboration between various individuals, and ensuring students are meeting their Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Elementary novice teachers (6.7%) and elementary veteran teachers (13.3%) along with secondary novice teachers (8.0%) and secondary veteran teachers (8.0%) agreed that the special education workload was accurately reflected in the job description. Conversely, elementary novice teachers (13.4%) and elementary veteran teachers (66.7%) along with secondary novice teachers (16.0%) and secondary veteran teaches (68.0%) disagreed, meaning that the special education workload was not accurately reflected in the job description. The

difference between agreement and disagreement is large and should be further

explored as a potential factor affecting attrition rates.

Participants were asked to rank the factors that contributed to their

decisions to possibly leave the teaching profession (see Table 40).

Table 40

Factors that Contributed to Teachers' Decisions to Possibly Leave the Teaching
Profession.

	Elementary School		Secondary School	
	Novice	Veteran	Novice	Veteran
Administrative Support	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Salary		2.00	1.50	1.60
Lack of Student Discipline	1.50	2.00	2.00	2.07
Benefits				4.00
Disrespect from Student	3.00	2.83	2.50	3.00
Disrespect from Parent		4.00	3.00	4.00
Job Duties	2.00	4.00	2.00	4.33
Health		4.50	4.00	5.50

Note: N = 15 (Elementary school) and N = 27 (Secondary School). Rank order

was used to determine the most important factors. Range is (1-8) with the 1

being the most important and 8 being the least important. Ranks were averaged

by number of participant responses.

Participants were given eight factors that may have contributed to their

decision to leave the teaching profession. Rank order was used to determine the

most important factor for each identified group above. The eight factors were (1)

administrative support, (2) salary, (3) lack of student discipline, (4) benefits, (5) disrespect from students, (6) disrespect from parent, (7) job duties, and (8) health. The lower the score means the factor was more important.

The elementary novice teachers ranked administrative support (1.00) as the most important factor they considered in leaving the teaching profession. Additionally, lack of student discipline (1.50), job duties (2.00), and disrespect from students (3.00) were listed in order of importance as concerns.

The elementary veteran teachers ranked administrative support (1.00) as the most important factor they considered in leaving the teaching profession. Additionally, salary and lack of student discipline (2.00), disrespect from students (2.83), disrespect from parents and job duties (4.00), and health (4.50).

Secondary novice teachers ranked administrative support (1.00) as the most important factor they considered in leaving the teaching profession. Additionally, salary (1.50), lack of student discipline and job duties (2.00), disrespect from students (2.50), disrespect from parents 3.00), and health (4.00).

Secondary veteran teachers ranked administrative support (1.00) as the most important factor they considered in leaving the teaching profession. Additionally, salary (1.60), lack of student discipline (2.07), disrespect from students (3.00) benefits and disrespect from parents (4.00), job duties (4.33), and health (5.50) (see Table 37 above).

These factors, specifically administrative support, should be further explored and investigated as how they impact teacher attrition rates of special education teachers.

Summary

Research question one was investigating what, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates in elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district. The most significant data comes from question eleven in the survey. Question eleven asked "Are you currently considering leaving the teaching profession?" The results were elementary novice teachers (40%), and secondary novice teachers (44%) were considering leaving the profession in under three years of service (see Table 14 above). For elementary novice teachers, that was 6 out of 15 participants and for secondary novice teachers, that was 11 out of 25 teachers. This may foreshadow potential problems in supporting novice teachers through the process of becoming veteran teachers.

Research question two was investigating what, if any, were the differences between Special Education Teachers attrition rates from beginning novice teachers to veteran teachers in elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district. Question twelve supports an understanding of the Special Education Teachers view of teaching. Question twelve asked "If you are considering resigning, would you consider returning to the teaching profession a

future option?" The results of this question were a potential look into how committed or convinced a teacher was to leave the teaching profession. According to the results, elementary novice teachers (8.3%) reported that they would not consider coming back to the teaching profession, even though in the prior question 6.6% were considering leaving (see Table 14 above). Secondary novice teachers (38.9%%) reported that they would not consider returning to the teaching profession, even though in the prior question 8.0% were considering leaving. A larger segment of the sample were the secondary veteran teachers (27.7%) who reported that they were not interested in coming back to the teaching profession, but in the prior question 36.0% of secondary veteran teachers were considering leaving (see Table 15 above). These findings show a difference between the novice and the veteran teachers and a difference between elementary and secondary settings.

Research question three was investigating what, if any, are the most significant factors that influenced Special Education Teachers to leave the profession within the elementary and secondary settings in a southern California school district. Survey question thirteen asked participants to rank, out of eight possible choices, the most significant factors that that they felt was making them consider leaving the teaching profession. Both elementary and secondary school settings across both the novice and veteran teachers ranked administrative support as their primary concern with each section earning a score of 1.00 (see Table 37 above). Elementary novice teachers (1.50) listed lack of student

discipline as their second concern while secondary novice teachers (1.50) ranked salary as their second highest concern. Elementary veteran teachers (2.00) salary and lack of student discipline as their second highest concern while secondary veteran teachers (1.60) listed salary as their second highest concern (see Table 37) above.

CHAPTER FIVE:
RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSIONS
Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates in a school district in southern California and compare elementary school settings with secondary school settings on the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates. This research added to the existing literature on special education teacher attrition rates and expanded the research with comparing different educational settings to see if there was a difference in what impacts special education teachers to leave the profession.

The problem the study addresses were the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates across elementary and secondary settings that influence special education teachers to leave the teaching profession.

A quantitative research methodology was utilized. An electronic survey was sent out to the entire school district using Peachjar. Peachjar is an online program that allows users to share documents electronically, reducing the use of paper. Peachjar was required to be used by the school district. A document was

sent to all teachers requesting their participation using goggle forms. The document was approved by the director of State and Federal programs at the district and was emailed out to the entire district. The survey was open for two weeks. Halfway through the two weeks, a reminder email was sent asking for participants that had not participated to consider participating. All data was collected using goggle forms. As the document was sent out to all teachers, the researcher identified from the survey the special education teachers by utilizing question 19. Only special education teachers were utilized for the research leaving forty-two participants (n = 42). All participants voluntarily completed the electronic survey.   Participants personal information was not recorded in any form and all entries were completely anonymous. Due to the low number of elementary special education teachers, inferential statistics were used to summarize data in percentages.

<center>Recommendations for Educational Leaders</center>

Special education teacher attrition rates were looked at in a large school district in southern California. Three research questions were posed. The first question investigated what, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates in elementary and secondary settings. The second question investigated what, if any, are the differences between Special Education Teacher attrition rates from novice teachers and veteran teachers in elementary and secondary settings. The third question investigated what, if any, are the most

significant factors that influence Special Education Teachers to leave the profession within the elementary and secondary settings.

Summary of Important Findings

Data analysis for the first research question found that 40% of Special Education Teachers in the elementary setting and 44% of teachers in the secondary setting were considering leaving the teaching profession. These percentages were lower than the national average reported by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) who reported that special education teacher attrition rates were 16% annually. William and Dikes (2015) found similar information, reporting that special education teacher attrition rates are nearly double that of the elementary teacher setting at 13.0%.

Data analysis for the second research question found that novice elementary teachers (6.6%) and secondary novice teachers (8.0%) did not make up the largest portion of teachers considering leaving, but rather 33.3% of elementary veteran teachers and the 36.0% of the secondary veteran teachers made up the largest portion of teachers considering leaving the teaching profession. This finding means there was a difference between novice teachers and veteran teachers and their views on leaving the teaching profession. Hughes and O'Reilly (2015) reported finding differences between teachers who reported feeling supported by administrators, which impacted their decisions to leave the profession. Bettini et al., (2020) found that special education teachers who are

less prepared have higher levels of burnout and higher rates of attrition than those teachers with more experience. Teachers with more experience reported higher attrition rates when they did not feel supported by their administration.

Data analysis for research question three found that the most significant factor that influenced special education teachers to leave the profession between the elementary and secondary settings was administrative support. This finding was followed by lack of student discipline for novice teachers and salary for veteran teachers. Other factors that were ranked high from novice teachers were job duties, disrespect from students, and disrespect from parents. Other factors ranked high from veteran teachers was disrespect from students, disrespect from parents, and job duties. There are many factors that influence special education teacher attrition rates. Hughes and O'Reilly (2015) reported low attrition rates among special education teachers that had high ratings of perceived administrative support. Sayman, Chiu, and Lusk (2018) reported findings of increased teacher attrition rates across teachers with less teacher preparation practice, less education and training, being trained using alternative methods, and teachers with high levels of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) reported findings of higher teacher attrition rates in Title I schools, rural and urban school districts, schools with high populations of students of color, and special education teachers regardless of subject matter competency taught.

Next Steps for Educational Reform

The next steps that should be implemented as a result of the findings of this study are (1) changes in the special education teacher job description; (2) improved professional development opportunities and mentoring services for veteran teachers; and (3) improved training of all administrators being placed in charge of special education programs.

Many of the teachers disagreed that the job description was accurate for special education teachers. Out of all the responses in the survey, all teachers (81.0%) disagreed that the description was accurate. Understanding the difference between elementary (79.9%) and secondary teacher (84.0%) disagreement was a very large difference compared to those who reported that the job description was accurate 19.9% of elementary teachers and 16% of secondary teachers. This finding means that the description of the special education teachers' job is not matching the reality of the job, and therefore, many teachers may leave the position to look for a position that matches their understanding of the role of a special education teacher.

A second next step for educational reform would be to look at the differences between novice and veteran teachers on those that considering leaving the teaching profession. In all, 28% of special education teachers reported considering leaving the teaching profession and not returning. Elementary teachers (16.7%) and secondary teachers (38.9%) reported considering leaving and not returning to the teaching profession. Elementary novice and veteran teachers each reported (8.3%) were considering leaving the

teaching profession and not returning while 38.9% of secondary novice teachers and 27.7% of secondary veteran teachers were considering leaving the teaching profession and not returning. The differences between the elementary and secondary settings, specifically between novice and veteran teachers is large enough to be of concern and a call for change. Novice teachers are supported though mentorship programs in the district, but once completed, there are no other supports for veteran teachers other than site based professional development or district provided trainings, which clearly is negatively impacting special education teachers into wanting to leave and not return.

A third step for educational reform is to create a program to train the administrators in charge of special education. The largest factor reported by special education teachers on why they were considering leaving the teaching profession was administrative support (1.00) across all elementary and secondary novice and veteran teachers. Out of all of the participants in the survey, 38.1% disagreed that they felt supported by their site administration and an even larger amount 53.7% disagreed that they felt supported by the district office. Elementary teachers (26.7%) disagreed that they felt supported by their site administration and (53.3%) disagreed that they felt supported by the district office. Secondary teachers (44.0%) reported not feeling supported by their site administration and (56.0%) disagreed that they felt supported by the district office. With administrative support being ranked so highly by the special education teachers, a change to improve how special education teachers are

supported by both site and district administration should be developed, implemented, and researched to ensure a reduction of special education attrition rates occurs.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Future Research</div>

As a result of this study, the quantitative method that was utilized, with no collection of personal information, did not allow for any follow-up questions or for clarification. Gaining a better understanding of the why participants were considering leaving the teaching profession, or why, if they were considering leaving, they would not consider returning to teaching in the future, could add more depth and understanding. Being able to conduct a mixed methods study would allow for a deeper and more impactful understanding of the factors impacting special education teachers and why they are choosing to leave the teaching profession. Quantitative research would also allow for additional methods for researchers to ensure that the voice, tone, and meaning of the participants was accurately captured increasing the validity and reliability of the study.

A second recommendation resulting from this study would be to increase the number of special education teachers in the study from elementary settings, specifically from the kindergarten to second grade levels to gain a better understanding of how this group responds to questions about leaving the profession. This increase in elementary participants could be obtained from

increasing the sample size of participating districts, targeting specific numbers of teachers in each group under investigation, or changing the way teachers were contacted or recruited to be more specific to the population needed.

Limitations of the Study

After the data was collected, the limitations of this study were (1) generalizability, (2) predictability, and (3) fear of reporting. This study only looked to obtain participants from a large southern California school district. The results obtained only relate to this specific school district and cannot be generalized to other school districts with similar size, location, or student populations. Additionally, participants were not randomly sampled, limiting the generalizability of the study.

This study cannot predict outcomes or reasons why special education teachers are leaving the teaching profession. The study did not look at correlations, or differences between the means of groups due to limited numbers of participants in certain groups. There was no data that was collected that could have been used to allow researchers to determine one factors importance over another, other than how teachers ranked the order.

A third limitation of this study involved teachers reporting that they were considering leaving the school district. Fear of reporting, if their information was to be obtained in some form, might have had teachers feeling fearful to accurately answer questions for fear of employment loss, retribution from a
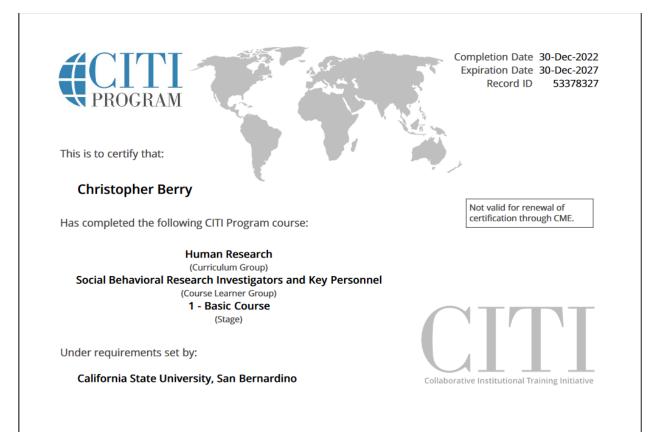
supervisor, or management. This limitation could impact the validity and reliability of the study.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, the most significant finding was the importance of how the special education teachers ranking of administrative support crossed over every subcategory, elementary novice and veteran teachers and secondary novice and veteran teachers. All four categories ranked this the most important factor in determining if they are planning on leaving or staying in the teaching profession. With these results, the research would recommend that the school district complete the following (1) poll site and district administrators on their professional development needs as it relates to supporting special education teachers; (2) develop a training program or professional development opportunities for those site-based and district administrators who are working directly with special education teachers that would improve teachers level of feeling supported in their positions; and (3) develop, implement, and monitor a training program to support both elementary and secondary veteran teachers in their level of needed supports to reduce their frustrations and wanting to leave the profession.

APPENDIX A

CERTIFICATION FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Completion Date 30-Dec-2022
Expiration Date 30-Dec-2027
Record ID   53378327

This is to certify that:

Christopher Berry

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

Human Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

California State University, San Bernardino

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w7576ab83-d1b1-4a3e-bbfa-aed69b846ab8-53378327

APPENDIX B

EMAIL TO STAFF

████ Teacher Conducting Research

Feffer, James (jfeffer@ ████ **)**

Fri 3/3/2023 4:29 PM

To ████ - Teachers ████ -Teachers@ ████ ;

Cc Kovats, Simone (skovats@ ████ <skovats@ ████ ; Berry, Christopher (cberry@ ████ <cberry@ ████

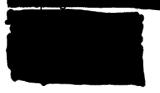📎 1 attachments (27 KB)
Research Cover Letter.docx;

Greetings ████ teachers,

Please see the attached cover letter from Chris Berry, a ████ teacher who is working on his doctorate. This study has been approved within ████ and participation is completely voluntary and optional. Please contact the researcher directly with any questions.

Thanks,

Jim Feffer, Ed.D.
Director – State and Federal Programs
████ Educational Services
████

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO
Ed.D., Educational Leadership

Attention Special Education Teachers

IRB Approval Number: IRB – FY2023-166

We are asking that you please participate in a study on Special Education Teacher Attrition Rates that we are conducting as part of a dissertation study on the factors that may have an impact on special education teachers to leave the profession.   The link to the survey is below. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Statements concerning informed consent, confidentiality of responses, description of the study and other information about your participation in this study can be found below the link to the survey.

Survey link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdlNcmptcL3JGLKVN2QWtOuNr-qo2WZ4pe-b_2tESExxvCeUQ/viewform?usp=pp_url

INFORMED CONSENT:

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates. This study is being conducted by Mr. Christopher Berry under the supervision of Dr. Sharon Brown-Welty, Professor at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE:

This quantitative research study will be utilized to gain insights from respondents about the topic of special education teacher attrition rates from special education teachers in a large school district in southern California. The purpose of the study is to examine the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates in a school district in southern California and compare elementary school settings with secondary school settings on the factors associated with special education teacher attrition rates.   The participants in this study will be special education teachers employed by a large school district in southern California.

DESCRIPTION:

To respond to the research questions, a quantitative research survey entitled "Special Education Teacher Attrition Survey" will be utilized. Survey will be sent to each special education teacher within the school district based on information provided by the Special Education department and/or Human Resources for all current special education teachers during the 2022-2023 school years. Each survey will be sent directly to the teacher using district email with an attached google form for data collection.

Each participant will be asked to complete 19 questions. Of the 19 questions, 11 of the questions are based on a four-point Likert scale to have participants respond to their level of agreement from strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. One question is answering with a yes or no, if the participant is considering leaving the teaching profession. One question is asking participants to check the factors that are associated with them deciding to leave the profession. The remaining six questions are related to demographics such as age, ethnicity, primary school level, highest level of education, where they obtained their educational training, and their level of experience being a special education teacher.

PARTICIPATION:

Participation is completely voluntary, and you can freely withdraw from participation at any time. The researchers and research are not connected to the school district and withdrawal of your participation will not affect or change employment of participants. All answers submitted will not be shared individually with the school district or any superiors. Scores will be shown in averaged or aggregate data and will not be able to be tied back to individual answers. Confidentiality will be strictly followed. All answers will be stored on the California State University, San Bernardino, Google server.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All research will remain confidential, and answers will on be shared as averaged data scores. All answers will be shared via google forms. Data will be stored on the CSUSB Google server under the researchers' school identification.

DURATION:

The Special Education Teacher Attrition Survey should take approximately 10 to 20 minutes to complete in one setting.

RISKS:

The immediate and short-term risks may be psychological discomfort having to complete a questionnaire that is requesting information from the participants about their decisions to leave their current position. Overall, the risks for participating in this study should be minimal.

BENEFITS:

Benefits for completing the survey may be that the aggregate voices of special education teachers could be presented and shared with the school district to facilitate change in job details, job expectations, and change potential processes for hiring, retaining, and improving special education teacher development.

VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH:

There is no audio/video or photography used in this study.

CONTACT:

For any questions or concerns, please contact:

Dr. Sharon Brown-Welty

COE – Educational Leadership & Technology ELT

5500 University Parkway

San Bernardino, Ca. 92407-2318

(909) 537-8271

sharonb@csusb.edu

RESULTS:

Results may be obtained after the completion of the study at:

College of Education – Educational Leadership & Technology ELT

5500 University Parkway

San Bernardino, Ca. 92407-2318

APPENDIX D

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER ATTRITION SURVEY

Special Education Teacher Attrition Survey

For questions 1-12, please select only one answer. Your answers will be confidential and only portrayed in the aggregate.

1. My educational experience prepared me to meet the academic needs of the students I teach.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

2. My educational experience included preparation to teach in schools with high populations of students of color.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

3. I was prepared to teach in a culturally diverse classroom.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

4. The teaching profession was consistent with my expectations and dreams.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

5. I enjoy working with children.

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

6. I have a strong working relationship with my colleagues.

○ Strongly Agree	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ Strongly Disagree

7. I feel supported by my site administration.

○ Strongly Agree	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ Strongly Disagree

8. I feel supported by the Special Education Department at the District Office.

○ Strongly Agree	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ Strongly Disagree

9. My expectation of the teaching profession did fit the actual reality of the classroom.

○ Strongly Agree	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ Strongly Disagree

10. The workload of the special education teacher job description was accurate.

○ Strongly Agree	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ Strongly Disagree

11. Are you currently considering leaving the teaching profession?

○ Yes	○ No

12. If you are considering resigning, would you consider returning to the teaching profession a future option?

o Strongly Agree	o Agree	o Disagree	o Strongly Disagree

For the next question, please rank the factors in order of importance.

13. The factors that contribute to my decisions to possibly leave the teaching profession are?

Administrative Support	Lack of Student Discipline	Disrespect from Students	Disrespect from Parents
Salary	Benefits	Job Duties	Health Considerations

Demographics

14. What is your age? _____

15. What is your ethnicity?

> g. White
> h. African American
> i. Hispanic
> j. Asian
> k. Other
> l. Prefer not to say

16. What is your primary school level? (Select (X) one)

> e. Elementary Setting: K – 2nd grades _____
> f. Elementary Setting: 3rd – 5th grades _____
> g. Secondary Setting: 6th – 8th grades _____
> h. Secondary Setting: 9th – 12th grades _____

17. What is your highest level of education? (Select (X) one)

        d. Bachelor's Degree ___
        e. Master's Degree   ___
        f.   Doctoral Degree   ___

18. Where did you receive your educational training that prepared you to teach students with disabilities? (Select (X) one)

        c. University setting ___
        d. Alternative Certification Program ___

Thank you for completing this survey. Please click the submit button.

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

IRB #: IRB-FY2023-166
Title: Factors Associated with Special Education Teacher Attrition Rates
Creation Date: 12-12-2022
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Sharon Brown-Welty
Review Board: CSUSB Main IRB
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved

Key Study Contacts

Member	Christopher Berry	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	christopher.berry9095@coyote.csusb.
Member	Sharon Brown-Welty	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	sharonb@csusb.edu
Member	Sharon Brown-Welty	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	sharonb@csusb.edu

References

Bettini, E., Cumming, M., Merrill O'Brien, Bursting, N., Ragunathan, M., Sutton, R., and Chopra, A., (2020). Predicting special educators' intent to continue teaching students with emotional or behavioral disorders in self-contained settings. *Exceptional Children,* 86(2), 209-228. Doi: 10.1177/0014402919873556

Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). The trouble with teacher turnover: How teacher attrition affects students and schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives,* 27(36), 1-32.

Cruz, R., Lee, J., Aylward, A., & Kramarczuk-Voulgarides, C. (2020). The effect of school funding on opportunity gaps for students with disabilities: Policy and context in a diverse urban district. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, p. 1-12.* Doi: 10.1177/1044207320970545

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016).

Fields, A., (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics.* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Ca.

Hughes, A, Matt, J. & O'Reilly, F. (2015). Principal support is imperative to the retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. *Journal of Education and Training*, 3(1), pgs. 129-34.

Maslach, C. (2003). Job Burnout: New Directions in Research and Intervention.

    Current Directions in Psychological Science, 12(5), 189–192.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.01258

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S., (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout.

    Journal of Occupational Behavior, 2, 99-113. Doi:10.1002/job.4030020205

Mason, S., & Poyatos Matas, C. (2015). Teacher Attrition and Retention

    Research in Australia: Towards a New Theoretical Framework. *Australian*

    Journal of Teacher Education, 40(11).

    http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n11.3

Pas, T, Bradshaw, C., Hershfeldt, P., & Leaf, P., (2010). A multilevel exploration

    of the influences of teacher efficacy and burnout on response to student

    problem behavior and school-based service use. *School Psychology*

    Quarterly, 25(1), 13-27.

Sayman, D, Chiu, C, & Lusk, M., (2018). Critical incident reviews of alternatively

    certified special educators. *Journal of the National Association for*

    Alternative Certification, 13(1), 1-14.

Stock, W. & Carriere, D., (2021). Special education funding and teacher

    turnover. *Education Economics, 1-18,* doi:

    10.1080/09645292.2021.1914001

Williams, J., & Dikes, C., 2015. The implications of demographic variables as

    related to burnout among a sample of special education teachers. *Project*

    Innovation, 135 (3), p. 337.