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Pathways to Retention of Alternatively Licensed Special Education Teachers

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Pathways to Retention of Alternately Licensed Special Education Teachers

Meghan W. Sinning

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

Winona State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Dissertation Committee:

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Abstract

Special Education teacher retention has been a chronic concern for administrators for the past 45 years. Since 1975 when the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was passed, providing Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with exceptionalities, school districts' ability to hire appropriately licensed Special Education teachers has been a continual concern.

Additionally, Special Education teachers' turnover rate exceeds that of many other content areas in education. The Special Education teachers attrition rates who have completed an alternate route to licensure program have been even greater than traditionally trained Special Education teachers. The study's quantitative research has focused on a group of 32 alternatively prepared Special Education teachers and the reasons for their retention in their current positions. The alternatively prepared group of educators has defied the reported statistics of attrition rates and stayed with their districts and in their teaching positions for over one year, which is the length of time most alternatively prepared teachers stay. Data for the study were gathered by distributing a Likert scale survey developed around Situational Leadership and Sense of Place theories. Three factors emerged from the survey results. The teacher's relationship with the building administrator at the onset of the school year and throughout the school year arose as a high-rated element for retention. Furthermore, the relationship teachers have with their students and the teacher's residential location in proximity to the school also emerged as influential retention factors. The study results will contribute to the body of literature regarding retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers.

Keywords

Retention, Alternative Route to Licensure, Special Education Teacher, Principal Support, Situational Leadership, Longevity

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

Retention of Special Education teachers is a persistent issue nationally and is particularly acute in rural communities (Kena et al., 2016, Lambert, 2020). Consequently, to address the scarcity of licensed teachers serving students with identified exceptionalities, rural districts across the country support alternative routes to licensure programs (Aud et al., 2012). After one year of employment, the attrition rate of alternatively licensed teachers is eight percent higher than traditionally trained Special Education teachers (Redding & Smith, 2016). Additionally, Smith and Redding (2016) found that for every two alternatively prepared teachers leaving the field, only one traditionally trained Special Education teacher leaves. Overall, general education teachers are twice as likely to retain their positions as traditionally trained Special Education teachers (Bell et al., 2010). Smarick (2017) asserted that rural communities experience the lowest retention rates among Special Education teachers, resulting in innovative hiring practices to attract and retain personnel. Furthermore, Devney (2017), along with Hagaman and Casey (2018), theorized that career longevity directly affects student achievement, and as such, the creation of preservation pathways is critical in efforts to maintain employment of the alternatively licensed Special Education staff.

The field of Special Education has one of the highest attrition rates for K-12 teachers (Vitteck, 2015). The attrition rates for traditionally trained Special Education teachers remain high, but the frequency of departure is greater for alternatively licensed special educators (Rosenberg, Sindelar & Hardman, 2004). Redding and Smith (2016) stated for staff to attrit comes from the lack of connections and support of the administration. Therefore, more research examining why teachers stay will create more cohesion for the students, staff, and building. The

research data comes from the dissemination of a Likert rating scale distributed to teachers working in a public-school setting. In the study, the participating teachers were admitted to an alternative route to licensure program through a midwestern university. Instrumentally, the use of a quantitative rating scale determined the rationale for teacher retention in their prospective districts.

Existing literature focuses on alternatively licensed special educators on attrition, not retention (Hangaman & Casey, 2018). Identifying teachers who stay will identify the qualities and characteristics of teachers and formulate a framework for administrators (Vittekk, 2015). Gathering data regarding the existing literature gap will bring clarity to working organizational strategies (Redding & Smith, 2016). Much like the developing understanding of pedagogical approaches for students, the ever-evolving understanding of administrator support for staff is fundamental (Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2013).

Background

Educational rights for all learners were written into law in 1975 with the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) (NEA, PL 94-142, 1975). EAHCA began the ever-continuing demand for appropriately licensed Special Education teachers. As the reauthorization of EAHCA took place in 1990, 1997, and 2004, the demand for Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) has increased. As No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted in 2002 with provisions requiring teachers to have very specific qualifications, the task fell upon districts to hire teachers who only met the specific prerequisites (West, 2003). With the persistent need to increase the pool of appropriately licensed Special Education teachers, the development of alternative retention programs continued to emerge (Barley, 2009). The mindset of creative hiring practices has been ever-present since the origination of Special Education law. The

development of alternatively licensed teacher pathway programs, while focusing on teacher retention, creates many innovative opportunities, such as *Grow Your Own* initiatives (Newblom, 2013).

In 2015 the revitalization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) enacted during the Obama Administration, attempted to address the pitfalls. The new law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, addressed the need for properly trained teachers in the high-needs classroom setting, with adjustments to licensure requirements. With the rejuvenation of the 50-year-old federal education law, many teachers' concerns for public schools were addressed (ESSA, 2015). However, rural districts continued to struggle with Special Education teacher retention (Miller, 2012). Consequently, administrative leaders began consulting the research to identify the cause of attrition (Clement, 2017; Maranto & Shuls, 2012; Traver, 2017). Rarely is preservation discussed, especially the retention of educators who complete alternate routes to earning teacher licensure. The study will address the research gap regarding the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers employed in various communities.

Presently, forty-seven alternately licensed Special Education teachers work in K-12 schools in various regions of a midwestern state. The group of educators is surpassing the currently reported attrition rates (Newblom, 2013). Some of the alternatively licensed educators are now teaching in their fifth year as an alternatively licensed and prepared Special Education teacher, exceeding the attrition rates by four years (Miller, 2012). Cancio, et al. (2013) identified specific administrative traits influencing alternatively licensed teacher retention. As the Special Education alternative licensure study commences, the characteristics demonstrated in connection to retention will be examined.

When public school students have properly licensed teachers, many benefits are evident: higher attendance rates, lower dropout rates, increased test scores, and decreased behavioral referrals (Nolan, 2013). Student success increases when teachers stay longer than one year, and a rapport is developed between the student and teacher. Directly reported factors associated with a relationship rapport are higher graduation rates, higher college enrollment, and higher test scores (Bobek, 2002). Each time a district goes through the process to hire a new teacher, it costs the district an average of \$20,000. Costs of hiring new teachers include separation expenditures, recruitment, training, and hiring. When teachers leave after one or even two years, the investment cost is lost (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). While districts save money when teachers stay, students with exceptionalities receive the ultimate benefit when teacher retention is high (Bobek, 2002). As public-school administrators examine the school's and district's needs, prevention of attrition benefits all (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Over the years, theorists have created various frameworks to provide administrators with resources geared toward teacher retention and career longevity. The longer current teachers continue educating students in their current buildings, more growth and learning opportunities will exist (Versland, 2013). Mitchell et al. (2001) focus on factors associated with job embeddedness and the role in retention. Maslow (1943) states that when employees' basic needs are met, stability within the environment and respect for intelligence is provided. Mitchell et al., (2001), Herzberg (1966) and Vroom (2000, 2003) also contributed, along with clear and concise expectation, job embeddedness solidifies, and retention increases career satisfaction. When employees feel supported, heard, appreciated, and respected, retention rates increase.

Job embeddedness characteristics are multifaceted, with an overall focus on a direct connection among the individual, the work organization, community, and career success (Mitchell et al., 2001). Employees with connections to individuals, groups, and teams have a sense of belonging. The feeling of being needed for one's experience and knowledge is essential in job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001). When employees have multiple connectivity layers, the decision to end employment becomes a sacrifice (Deutsch et al., 2011). Dedicated employees are an administrator's desire, resulting in continuity for students (Berry & Gravelle, 2018) and less economic damage for the district (Feistritzer & Haar, 2008), leading to a healthier, better life for all involved.

Building administrative engagement regarding the current retention rates for alternately licensed Special Education teachers has demonstrated a lack of job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001). Supportive administrators are a key characteristic in providing basic employment needs and disseminating appreciation, respect, and the acknowledgment that each educator brings a set of expertise to the building and district. The celebration of these skills increases retention. Gathering data to provide district leaders with a clear set of support expectations for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers will create an increase in learning opportunities for the district's most vulnerable students (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2018).

Evidence of engaged and supportive administrators has been a key element in all teachers' career longevity (Herzberg, 1964; Vroom, 2000, 2003; Berry & Gravelle, 2018). Hersey and Blanchard's (1969, 1974, 1977, 1982), research regarding Situational Leadership demonstrates the need for school leaders to be involved in the daily ongoing with the staff to build relationships, respect, and connectivity. Cherry (2019) added that the importance of educational leaders' responsibility is to adapt, alter, and change their leadership

style to meet the needs of the building faculty and staff. Without adjustment, staff will feel disconnected from building leaders, resulting in higher attrition rates. Furthermore, Goleman et al. (2002), recognized the importance and implications of leadership feedback and encouragement, resulting in higher retention rates.

Problem Statement

The current research surrounding alternative licensing for Special Education teachers focuses on attrition rates (Rosenberg, et al., 2004). However, retention cannot be discussed without addressing attrition (Bobek, 2002). The research exemplifies attrition rates for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers, which is eight percent higher than that of traditional teachers after one year of employment (Redding & Smith, 2016). Within the public school system, the students being served by Special Education teachers are the most vulnerable population (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2018). High attrition rates of Special Education teachers negatively impact students' academic success and growth (Versland, 2013). The current research gap exists in retaining alternately prepared special educators in the public-school setting. Based on the literature, little is known about the direct connection between them and the community in which they teach, in addition to the amount of administrator support received.

Purpose of the Study

Historically, access to highly qualified Special Education teachers has been limited (Wilder Research, 2019). Districts have become creative in developing *Grow Your Own* programs to attract teachers who live in the community to become the teacher of record (Barley, 2009). In examining Mitchell et al.'s job embeddedness theory, identifying the characteristics and traits for successful Special Education teacher retention is critical to K-12 students and learning stability (Mitchell et al., 2001). Additionally, Hersey and Blanchard's

Situational Leadership Theory provides insight into the administrative leadership team's responsibility to retain teachers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1974, 1977, 1982). Identifying what is working to defy the currently reported attrition rates of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers results in increasing student success rates (Nolan, 2013; Versland, 2013; Berry & Gravelle, 2018).

Research Question and Hypothesis

In Special Education, hiring and retaining teachers is a challenge (Kena et al., 2016). An administrative workaround is to hire teachers willing to enroll in alternative licensure programs (Brenner et al., 2015). To measure the factors associated with the retention rate of alternatively licensed teachers who stay in rural communities, Creswell (2013) suggested the researcher write valid and reliable research questions that elicit deep and meaningful responses from participants. The research question that may begin to address the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers in rural communities is:

RQ: To what extent do alternatively licensed Special Education teachers perceive their relationship with students, parents, teachers, and administration as a predictor of retention?

H: Positive student, parent, teacher, or administrator relationship with an alternatively licensed Special Education teacher contributes to the career longevity and retention of the educator.

Rationale for the Study

The quantitative study of alternatively licensed Special Education teacher retention aims to identify the characteristics and traits of individuals who show persistence, investment, and commitment to the students, the building staff, and the community. The literature highlights

many of the reasons for teachers leaving the field (Wilder Research, 2019). However, a literature gap remains regarding what is working and why alternatively licensed Special Education teachers are staying. For administrators, having a better understanding of retention is proved to benefit the students (Redding & Smith, 2016) and the fiscal cost to districts (Feistritz & Haar, 2008). The study results will also build a framework for administrators to use as they support the alternatively licensed teaching staff. Identification of successful attributes associated with supervisor support will encourage teachers to continue teaching in a field with one of the highest attrition rates (Versland, 2013).

Significance of the Study

National attrition rates hover eight percent higher for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers (Redding & Smith, 2016). The overall attrition rate for Special Education professionals is the highest in the educational industry (Wilder Research, 2019). The significant need for building a greater understanding surrounding retention may begin to combat the continued revolving door of new Special Education teachers in the K-12 public school setting. As the research around the topic deepens, a framework to guide administrators in providing the essential components of support may be used to retain highly qualified teachers. Through the connections with the career path, staff, and community, education professionals will focus on the students' needs rather than looking for a better and more supportive career (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Nature of the Study

The group of individuals participating in the study consists of more than 25 alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. Creswell (2013) states that when a sample group exceeds 25 participants, quantitative research generates more robust results for analysis. Through

quantitative Likert rating scale questions, narrowing in on specific traits and characteristics that sustain the educational teachers in their schools will provide evidence for administrators to examine, continue, or alter the current practices of teacher support. With the quantitative rating scale administration distributed to over thirty alternatively licensed Special Education teachers across urban, suburban, and rural settings, the ability to identify key components for retention will be readily seen.

Definition of Terms

Administrative Support – Emotional support, informational support, individual consideration, and support in professional growth are characteristics. Trust, opportunities for growth, appraisal, guidance, and feedback. Instrumental support in the areas of employment responsibilities (Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2013).

Alternative Licensure – The requirements outlined by each state for a teacher to become qualified to teach the specified content and grade level while the teacher obtains the required credentials outside the traditional framework of teacher preparation in a traditional four-year degree format in education (Newblom, 2013).

Alternatively Licensed Teacher – Teacher of record assumes a traditionally trained teacher's role and responsibility while concurrently participating in a teacher preparation program embedded with standards and learning experiences aligned with desired licensure (Bell et al. 2010).

Alternative Route to Licensure – Teacher preparation programs enrolling non-certified teachers with a bachelor's degree in a non-educational field by providing unique curricula leading to eligibility for a standard teaching credential in the desired content area (Feistritz & Haar, 2008).

Career Longevity – The primary measurement impacting career length is the legacy and influence an employee creates. The measure of success typically comes through an individual's self-efficacy levels and intrinsic motivation resulting in career length (Petersen, Jung, Yang, & Stanley, 2011).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – Passed in December 2015 as an overhaul to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965). Requirements of ESSA include advancing equities for all learners, college readiness, communication on assessments, support of local growth and initiatives, high-quality preschools, and accountability of the lowest-performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, December).

Highly Qualified Special Education Teacher – Teachers delivering explicit educational opportunities in the core academic areas. Educators not providing direct instruction to learners in the core subjects, or providing consultation to the highly qualified teacher to modify curriculum and assist in accommodations are not required to demonstrate core subject competencies in the core content. Teachers must also hold a four-year degree, state certification or licensure, and evidence of content knowledge (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Enacted in 2002, the act is based on stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more parental choice in school options. Essential elements include closing the achievement gap, including students with various disadvantages, and increasing academic achievement goals with the support of federal funds where districts may use funds as deemed appropriate. Districts will utilize research-based educational practices and programs while also allowing for the parent to transfer their student to other educational institutions when their home school does not meet the minimum requirements (West, 2003).

Rural Minnesota School Districts – The subjects participating in the study are Special Education educators working with a Tier 2 licensure (PELSB, 2019). The region in which the alternate licensed teachers remain employed contains 16 school districts (Region 10, 2020). Student population of 78,728; 5,965 teachers with four percent teaching with special permission (Wilder Research, 2019).

Situational Leadership – The leader's ability to select the most suitable leadership style based on the needs of the faculty and staff's readiness level (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977).

Teacher Attrition – The turnover rate of educators regarding a change in status from year to year. Reasons for departure may include teachers who leave the professions or teachers who switch subject matter. For the study, the definition used will relate to educators who leave the education profession (Nolan, 2013).

Teacher Retention – Comprised of four elements: job satisfaction, induction programs, mentoring, and administrative support. Additionally, factors connected to retention include stipends for extra professional duties. For the study, the retention data examined will be of the educators who remained employed as a teacher from previous academic year (Vittekk, 2015).

Traditional Trained Teacher – Enrollment in a bachelor's degree educational licensure program where student teaching is completed under the direction and supervision of an experienced teacher in the same content area for which licensure is sought (Qu & Becker, 2003).

Assumptions

Historically, Special Education teachers attrition rates has been high; additionally, the attrition rate for alternatively licensed educators is even more significant (Redding & Smith, 2016). Research has repeatedly discussed why teachers leave (Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2013); conversely, retention of alternatively licensed teachers is rarely covered (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Systematically, the lack of retention research is understandable as the rate of attrition is more noticeable and financially damaging to districts, despite the gains districts see for students and staff when teachers stay (Feistritzer & Haar, 2008). Through a quantitative research rating scale, examining the current alternatively licensed Special Education teacher will provide insights into how the odds are being defied and why teachers are staying. Participants responses will be anonymous, thus resulting in responses uninhibited and therefore will not reflect data that may be nonconclusive to understanding retention. Nonetheless, the rating scale questions will represent the key trends in both characteristics and traits of the participants' districts, buildings, and administration, providing a lens of retention and career longevity.

Delimitations

Roberts (2010) identified a delimitation in research studies to be restrictions and frameworks of a study intentionally to include or exclude specific groups, items, or elements. Identified by the researcher, the study's delimitation involves the sample group's consent, timeframe, and data collection methodology. Delimitations of the study include the lack of funding to take the study broader and wider than the current scope of participants. Access to the group of contributors is provided through the university program admittance in a Special Education alternative licensure. However, with the nature of the quantitative study, distribution and data collection will provide a robust data set from the participants.

Limitations

Plano Clark and Creswell (2015) define a limitation as a fault or prospective fault recognized by the researcher. Limitations of quantitative research tend to occur through the methodology of the rating scale tool itself and the questions being asked. While able to distribute a quantitative research rating scale far and wide, the personal narrative a qualitative study

provides gives insight to the more personal angle to detail. In addition to the methodology, each educator comes with prior knowledge and experience in the career field, influencing each question's responses. Personal bias affects how teachers interact with the world and how a response is formulated. Regardless, when the Likert rating scale instrument is strong and created to elicit as unbiased of a response as possible, results will be robust and informative (Plano Clark & Creswell (2015).

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The research topic background is covered in Chapter I of the study regarding the retention efforts for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. Additionally, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research question. the hypothesis, limitations and delimitations surrounding alternatively licensed teacher retention are introduced. In Chapter II, relevant literature articles will be reviewed to demonstrate the problem with attrition and identify efforts ascertaining traits and characteristics of administrative support that may increase retention rates of alternatively licensed Special Education professionals. The methodological elements of the study are embedded in Chapter III. Chapters IV and V will capture the detailed findings, recommendations, and summary, calling for further research in the very novice topic of retention of alternatively licensed special educators.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter II encompasses a synthesis of educational research in the field of Special Education alternatively licensed teachers. The themes the research highlights revolved mostly around attrition rates; however, there was minimal research focused on supports and retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers.

Historical Perspective of Special Education

Throughout the history of education, equitability has been at the forefront of conversations (West, 2003). One area of education that has experienced a deficit in equitability since its creation is Special Education. A major contributor to the deficit in equitable practices of Special Education is the low number of properly licensed, Special Education teachers. In efforts to mitigate the shortage of properly licensed Special Education teachers, alternative routes to licensure have been created (Feistrizer & Haar, 2008). In Special Education, highly qualified educators are often hard to come by (Wilder Research, 2019). Once the Special Education teacher is hired, the next challenging element is the teacher's retention (Anthony, 2009). When teachers are retained, students achieve more (McKee, 2003). Several benefits of teacher retention in Special Education have been recognized: the advantage for the K-12 learner (Allen, 2005), the benefit for the educator (Welch, 2018), and the benefit for the district (Heineke, Streff Mazza & Tichnor-Wagner, 2014).

Since the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975, the shortage of licensed Special Education teachers to serve students with Individual Education Programs (IEP) has been at a deficit. Forty-five years later, the deficit has yet to decrease. The recruitment and retention of appropriately licensed Special Education teachers

remain a chronic problem across the United States of America (Boe & Cook, 2006).

Consequently, universities and school districts have explored various options to create programming that is accessible, timely, and meets the standards set out by each state for Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT). Options for those wanting to become an HQT in the field of Special Education are limited, creating a vortex of problems that continue to cycle resulting in fewer licensure choices (Feistritzer & Haar, 2008; Allen, 2005).

The origin of alternatively licensed programs began in the 1980s (Newblom, 2013). While districts have been able to find candidates to participate, retaining the candidates continues to be problematic (Anthony, 2009). The area of research has limited articles which are scarcely strewn with articles regarding attrition; a minimal amount of time has been spent looking into teachers characteristics and traits, environments, and leadership *when teachers stay* (Devney, 2017). Leaders are addressing areas within each organization where the money is expunged; it would be expected that a remedy for the problem would have emerged through practice by now. However, research completed thus far demonstrates a strong link to building leadership. Building administrator leadership is a robust connector and reason why the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers stay (Graeff, 1983; Cherry, 2019). When teachers stay, students benefit; student benefits include higher learning and growth levels, lower dropout rates, higher test scores, and great social acceptance of all types of learners (Allen, 2005).

Development of Alternative Routes to Licensure

Seven years after the passing of Public Law 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children, Special Education teacher demand was at an all-time high (EAHCA, 1975). The first state to start alternative certification was Virginia, quickly followed by California, Texas, and New Jersey (Suell & Piotrowski, 2007). Alternative routes to licensure programs were initiated

in 1982 to meet teacher preparation and certification (Feistritzer & Haar, 2008). Many educational organizations followed the trend, developing local alternative routes to licensure. In 1986, a study was completed by the U.S. Department of Education that analyzed 20 alternative routes to licensure programs. The study was initiated due to the lack of supply and the unfilled demand of qualified teachers. Researchers focused on the program goals, expectations, recruitment, and preparation of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers (Anthony, 2009). Collection and analysis of alternative programs are ongoing. The National Center for Education (NCEI) presents the results each year in a state-by-state analysis. One finding from the NCEI report shows that by 2006, nearly 50,000 new teachers were certified through alternative routes. With the typical attrition rate being one year for Special Education teachers, to lose eight percent of the newly licensed teaching staff is staggering (Chapa, 2012). The attrition rate of newly licensed special education teachers exceeds the rate of loss of traditionally trained Special Education teachers and other content areas.

Research indicates that one possibility related to retaining alternatively licensed Special Education teachers may be tied to the quality of the alternative route to licensure program (Monk, 2007). Suell and Piotrowski (2007) identified five elements of an effective program: it actively works to require minorities; the selection of all candidates is carefully considered; coaching and mentorship; on-the-job training, and support; and accountable. When an alternative program maintains rigor and responsibility, which both the local education agency and the preparation program provided, candidates are more likely to stay in the field (Chapa, 2012). Many alternative programs across the country do not hold the same standards necessary for retaining alternatively prepared teachers, resulting in high attrition rates (Heineke, Streff Mazza & Tichnor-Wagner, 2014). High attrition rates are not solely the concern for Special Education;

other areas also experience a high loss of educators per year (Plash & Piotrowski, 2006). With the current state of education, at any given time, nearly 10% of the teaching staff may not be fully certified (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Identifying the reason for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers departing after a short duration in the field, many cite their reasons for leaving as a lack of mentorship, principal support, and the quality of the relationship developed within the school site (Anthony, 2009). A proverbial wedge is often inserted between traditionally trained teachers and alternatively certified teachers. Quigney (2010) shared how traditionally trained teachers criticized and devalued the alternative teacher. These behaviors are often observed in schools where the building administrative leadership lacks engagement and support for all teachers, but especially for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. When there is a national shortage of certified Special Education teachers, leadership, mentorship, and support at the building level are essential to retaining alternatively licensed Special Education teachers (Quigney, 2010).

While much of the past research has focused on the development of alternative programming, as well as the fallout from attrition rates of alternatively licensed teachers, the small amount of research completed to date regarding the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers does shed some light on how the problem may be mitigated. The CEEDAR Center (2018) examined the research scope and concluded that alternative route programs effectively retain teachers when the partnership between the district and university is in sync, providing support and connection on multiple levels. An extremely important area of support for retention is a positive school environment. Bettini et al., (2018) found that when

Special Education teachers have building leadership support, a direct impact on career longevity and retention is observed.

One way to provide the necessary support is for school leaders to be clear and concise about the beginning teacher's role. Providing a balance between a teacher's caseload, additional duties, and teaching responsibilities in addition to alternative certificate coursework, may be daunting (Bettini et al., 2018). When school leaders are aware of the alternative program's requirements, empathy increases, creating better understanding and a level of encouragement. Leaders may implement induction programs with well-trained mentors as a support strategy for new teachers. When support is provided over a two-to-three-year time frame, retention rates have increased (Sindelar et al., 2018). When the mentor is also an effective Special Education teacher, the alternatively certified Special Education teacher feels even more supported.

Impact of No Child Left Behind

In 2002 when the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was passed, options for hiring teachers changed (Birman et al., 2009). School leaders were now required to ensure their teachers held very specific credentials. Finding appropriately licensed individuals as Special Education teachers became very difficult. In the 2006-07 NCLB report, the areas where teachers were not meeting the qualifications for HQT were Special Education and middle school (Birman et al., 2009). While each state was required to outline and implement the requirements of being a highly qualified teacher under the NCLB law, existing educators were grandfathered in, even if the requirements for being an HQT were not met. The recruitment of new teachers after 2002 marks the beginning of the very difficult challenges of finding HQ Special Education teachers. While IDEA created a framework for providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to

students who qualified, having teachers implement the student's IEP had now become increasingly difficult because of NCLB, let alone the retention of these educators.

NCLB stipulated that to be considered an HQT, two requirements were necessary: a four-year degree along with full teacher credentialing and certification. For teachers who participated in alternative routes to licensure, which immediately disqualified educators from meeting the HQT requirements, expert content knowledge in Special Education could not be demonstrated. The rate at which Special Education teachers met the HQT requirements did increase over time. Rates increased from 52% to 72% in two years. However, 28% of the Special Education teachers were still not considered an HQT, leaving the most vulnerable students still at risk (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

During the initial time frame of NCLB, the research identified one reason for the increase in licensed Special Education teachers was access to educational grants and scholarships (U.S. Department of Education, FY Budget, 2005). The impact was noticed, but it was not enough. The attrition rates for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers remained the highest among all teachers (Hagaman & Casey, 2018). Without proper leadership support, the alternatively licensed teachers continued to leave in very high numbers. While NCLB was passed with good educational intentions, the fallout directly impacting Special Education students and their teachers created a harmful effect for students, which resulted in less educational growth and performance (Jorissen, 2002).

Attrition Rates

In association with alternative teacher retention and student success, the Situational Leadership Theory has been minimally addressed in the current and past research. An examination of both the research around the topic of an alternative route to licensure teacher

retention has been examined for fidelity and validates the reason for the current research by identifying the gaps in the literature. Often the literature explains why teachers leave, but rarely has research been conducted to identify the factors that contribute to alternately licensed Special Education teachers retention (Kelchtermans, 2017).

A particular group of teachers that has faced one of the country's highest attrition rates is the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers (Vitteck, 2015). With an eight percent higher attrition rate than their traditionally trained counterparts, identifying the gap in practice is essential to build relationships to where the alternatively licensed educators feel the desire to stay (Redding & Smith, 2016). The historical context of the problem around retaining alternatively licensed Special Education teachers across the country will amplify the connection teachers feel to leadership. Reviewing the Situational Leadership Theory, initially developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969), school administrators' contributing factors must be considered with both attrition and retention rates. Cherry (2019) recently updated and revised the leadership theory to include four styles and steps to leadership resulting in retention.

Much research has been conducted on the attrition of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers, yet minimal research has examined the retention (Jorissen, 2002). Gathering more empirical evidence about what is working will provide essential resources for administration in supporting staff. When the focus is solely on what is causing teachers to leave, the mindset becomes one of the pessimistic frameworks. When only focusing on the negative, administrators are less likely to invest in their alternatively licensed teachers because administrators are aware of the statistical one-year retention rates (Bobek, 2002). Teachers know when administrative support is lacking and then do not become invested in the position, resulting in high attrition rates.

Kelchtermans (2017) asserted that with the attrition rates for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers being the highest in the country and one of the most challenging positions to fill, the level of investment by building administration should be greater. However, the reality often results in a low level of investment from the building principal. Minimal expenditures, professional development, and administrative support are provided to alternatively licensed teachers (Hagaman and Casey, 2018). Psychologically, when a person does not see or feel the building administrator's investment, they leave (Cherry, 2019). Consequently, the stigma surrounding teachers who complete alternative routes to licensure is also looked down upon by other educators, as the traditional teacher believes alternative teachers are cheating the system by completing courses while teaching (Hagaman & Casey, 2018). Nevertheless, across the nation and for 35 years, alternative programs have existed (Newblom, 2013). The respect and understanding from traditionally trained educators are stunted in a rudimentary mindset in that there is more than one way to gain knowledge and become a highly effective teacher (Wilder Research, 2019).

In the handful of studies examining the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers, principal and administrator support indicated one of the strongest reasons regarding why teachers stay (Newblom, 2013). Building administrators who demonstrate adaptable leadership styles retain alternatively licensed teachers. When acknowledged and supported, teachers participating in an alternative route to licensure stay (Devney, 2017). Administrators who provided mentor support in both content area and building culture have positively impacted the teachers with the highest attrition rates (Anthony, 2009). When administrators take the time to get to know the faculty, teachers appreciate approachability and support, which are key components for retention (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Consequently,

when administrators carry an air of arrogance, the staff tend to have some of the highest attrition rates across all subject areas, let alone the teachers who need the most support (Brenner, et al., 2015).

Research on the topic of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers is generally focused on attrition rates. Researchers have identified what is not working (McKee, 2003; Boe & Cook, 2006; Birman et al., 2009; Devney, 2017). The prevalent gap in the research is in regard to retention (Anthony, 2009). The need to gather new data focusing on retaining alternatively licensed teachers is the priority.

Current State of Special Education

In California, there are currently 800,000 students receiving their education from partially credentialed educators. Many of these educators are enrolled in programs to earn their Special Education credentials (Lambert, 2020). Nationally, the U.S. Department of Education (2019) reports the teacher shortage of HQT Special Education teachers is currently 30%. Programs providing routes to alternative licensure are increasing across the country to address Special Education students' needs. In the United States, 48 states offer alternative programs (McFarland et al., 2019). While 30% of Special Education teachers lack proper certification, many are working on alternative routes. With the time, energy, and money spent on both parties' parts through educational and hiring costs, the hope is that the school leadership does a better job retaining the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers (Miller, 2012). Without proper support, mentorship, and resources, the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers will continue to attrit at an astounding rate (Tiplic, et al., 2015). Crafting a solution to retain teachers is beneficial for the students, the teacher, and the school districts.

Theoretical Framework: Situational Leadership Theory

In examining alternative licensed Special Education teacher retention, the theorists best known for identifying key elements in the leadership styles of directors and principals to support the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers are Hersey and Blanchard in the Situational Leadership Theory (1969, 1974, 1977, 1982). Since they first discussed the Life Cycle Theory of Leadership, many other researchers have added to the body of knowledge. Hersey and Blanchard integrated elements from Tuckman's four stages of development (1965), as well as Blake's and Mouton's Managerial Grid (1964), and Reddin's 3D Theory (1986) to focus on two factors influencing how leaders stay connected with their constituents: task behavior and relationship behavior.

Contributions to the Situational Leadership Theory from Blake and Mouton (1964, 1978) consist of the personal relationship component, explicitly focusing on the managerial grid. They focused on five different leadership styles, emphasizing relationships and productivity as two of the most important types. Based on a quadrant system alignment, each of the four main areas is housed independently, with the Middle of the Road comprising various essential components. The remaining four management styles are Impoverished Management, Task Management, Country Club, and Team Management. The influential quadrants impacting the Situational Leadership Theory are Country Club and Team Management. Both quadrants focus on relationship building rather than productivity, with crucial identification around creating a comfortable work environment where self-efficacy may be fostered (Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1978).

Tuckman's (1965) influence on what was initially known, and the Life Cycle Theory of Leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) bring in well-known elements in the management world

of forming, storming, norming, and performing. Tuckman realized how vital the relationship component was in employee success and he anchored forming at the beginning of the leadership process (Tuckman, 1965). Research demonstrates that one of the crucial keys to retaining alternatively licensed Special Education teachers is the relationship developed between the newly hired teaching staff and the administrators (Tuckman, 1965; Newblom, 2013).

Between forming and storming is where alternatively licensed teachers tend to quit.

Without forming being firmly established, storming will never happen. Storming is the critical stage for teaching staff to feel the administration's support as the staff works to support learners with the highest level of need in the building (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2018).

Reddin's 3D Theory (1986), highlighted different styles in leadership for educational administrators to learn from and implement. Four components from Reddin influenced the redevelopment of the Situational Leadership Theory in 1986. In efforts to adapt to current work environments, Hersey and Blanchard examined Reddin's grid, similar to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (1964) to ensure updated and current practices were reflected. Reddin placed the four-leadership styles into a quadrant system represented as Related, Integrated, Separated, and Dictated. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) incorporated and integrated into the Situational Leadership Theory. Strengthening the relationship between the building administrative leader and staff members is a requirement of retention of staff. Reddin (1986) focused on social constructs through the two quadrants that allow individuals to feel accepted and part of the organization. When one feels integrated, strong teams are developed, and networking is created, resulting in less turnover and more productivity (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

Other theories have examined leadership styles and their impact on the staff's overall satisfaction levels. Goleman et al.'s (2002) influence brought in six leadership styles: pacesetter,

authoritative, affiliative, coaching, democratic, and coercive. Some techniques lead to higher rates of effectiveness with employees than others. When new teachers are working toward licensure in conjunction with starting a new position, leaders who demonstrate affiliative and coach leadership styles is highly beneficial. Affiliative leaders bring a positive perspective resulting in long-term reinforcement of relationships (Goleman et al., 2002). The morale boost and sense of belonging are created from praise, encouragement, and bonding with the teacher's direct supervisor. Goleman et al. continue with the coaching style, focusing on developing each individual's skill set, talent, and strength, while administrators provide essential and explicit feedback to the staff. When employees are receptive to feedback and encouragements, the overall impact resonates (Goleman et al., 2002).

As the examination regarding retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers increases, Cherry (2019) recognizes how the best leaders adapt, alter, and change their leadership style to support individuals and staff in their charge. Administrators' revamping and morphing styles are an indication of the flexibility and understanding the various needs staff require. Cherry addresses the approach through an overhaul and update of Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1974, 1977, 1982) to modernize the process into four primary styles: Telling, Selling, Participating, Delegators (Cherry, 2019). With the update, the core structures of the stages remain fixed, while the terminology of communicating the styles now reflects current practice (Cherry, 2019). As good leaders know, the second stage of Selling is the buy-in stage, and if staff members never reach Selling, leaders will have lost the team. Time spent on the front end with new, alternatively licensed teachers in the Telling piece is where leaders will be grateful for early investment (Heineke, et al., 2014). If further Special Education alternatively licensed teachers are

left without leadership support, a disconnect will be created, resentment will ingrain, and detachment will create a wedge that will never allow the Selling stage to begin.

Through the multiple revisions of the Situational Leadership Theory, the theme continuing to rise is the essential need for relationship building between the leader and staff (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1974, 1977, 1982; Cherry, 2019). As leaders work to adapt their leadership style to that of the faculty, to form relationships (Tuckman, 1965), maintain the productive connections (Blake & Mouton, 1964), and create support systems with faculty (Goleman et al., 2002), they will likely result in higher retention rates of the staff (Cherry, 2019) which may directly benefit the K-12 learner (Allen, 2005).

Summary

Historically, the research identifies and indicates why alternatively licensed Special Education teachers leave the field after a short duration of time due to a lack of connectivity, support, and feedback from leaders (Rosenberg, et al., 2004). Since the beginning of Special Education in 1975, and the passing of Public-Law 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act, finding Highly Qualified Teachers has been challenging (West, 2003). By creating alternative routes to licensure, leaders believed it would address the shortage of Special Education teachers (Anthony, 2009). The research indicates very different results, with the highest attrition rates for any teacher being the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers (McKee, 2003). The research gap regarding attrition is prevailing. Identifying the key components of retention will be a critical element in overall student success.

Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

In the world of public-school education, the hiring and retention of highly qualified Special Education teachers is a time-consuming and daunting task for administrators (Heineke, et al., 2014). Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, creativity in developing different routes to licensure has become more wide-spread (Rosenberg, et al., 2004). As these alternative routes to Special Education licensure grow, the continued problem with attrition rates also remains a widespread difficulty for administrators (Redding & Smith, 2016). Typically, an alternatively licensed Special Education teacher remains in the position for which they were hired for less than one year, resulting in an extremely high turnover rate, which costs the district additional funds to continually rehire (Feistritz & Haar, 2008).

Examining alternatively licensed teachers who stay and what makes them remain is an essential need for the K-12 public school student. When teachers are retained, students benefit (Devney, 2017; Hagaman & Casey, 2018). When teachers leave, students fail to learn, resulting in a larger information gap and lower test scores. There is a gap in the current research for understanding why some alternatively licensed teachers persist in the current position. After a complete and thorough examination of the current research, focusing on retention instead of attrition is necessary for public-school students' success.

Purpose of the Study

A review of the existing literature surrounding the topic of alternatively licensed Special Education teacher retention, a gap in the literature exists (Heineke, et al., 2014; Feistritz & Haar, 2008; Rosenberg, et al., 2004). Much of the current research discusses ad nauseum the attrition rates of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers, yet few discuss retention

(Chapa, 2012). However, when research is completed to address retention, attrition is a prevalent part of the conversation.

When attrition is part of the conversation, retention is not mentioned (Clement, 2017). Focusing the current research study on retention will gain perspective into alternatively licensed Special Education teachers lives and what drives retention in their school's current teaching position. The themes that emerge add to the existing knowledge and provide more depth and understanding for administrators and leaders in public school settings to affect positive change in retaining teachers.

Research Question

In Special Education, hiring and retaining teachers is a challenge (Kena et al., 2016). An administration workaround is to hire teachers willing to enroll in alternative licensure programs (Brenner et al., 2015). To measure the factors associated with the retention rate of alternatively licensed teachers who stay in the current teaching position, Creswell (2013) suggests the researcher write valid and reliable research questions that elicit deep meaningful responses from participants. The research question which emerge that may address the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers in various communities.

RQ: To what extent do alternatively licensed Special Education teachers perceive their relationship with students, parents, teachers, and administration as a predictor of retention?

H: Positive student, parent, teacher, or administrator relationship with an alternatively licensed Special Education teacher contributes to the career longevity and retention of the educator.

Research Method

As the different types of research methods are examined to determine which would be most appropriate in answering the research questions, Sarantakos (2005) propagated that researchers should first examine each research paradigm's context. The selection of quantitative methods, a Likert rating scale, will be distributed among the sample of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. The method's selection was a decision made based on the number of participants and questions to be asked. Using two identifiers, Agree and Disagree, a series of related questions will be distributed to the teacher sample. Plano Clark and Creswell (2015) describe the Likert scale measurement as a way for participants to make a quantitative decision on the questions presented. Creating a two-point scale of agree or disagree requires the survey participant to decide their exact feelings based on the reviewed indicator. With the removal of somewhat agree and somewhat disagree as options, the survey participants then provide an exact response to the indicator associated with their retention through the various school-based relationships.

With the wording of the questions directly reflective of the research questions, the data collected through the rating scale will be original.

Research Design

Putman and Rock (2018) examined a variety of research methods and designs, including quantitative research. A quantitative research design to find the relationships between alternative Special Education teachers and the retention rates best fits the research questions. In discussing quantitative research design functionality, Putnam and Rock suggest that it allows for questions to be answered finitely (Putnam & Rock, 2018). As questions are presented, the accuracy of the wording creates the connection back to the research question. Therefore, when asking what

factors influence the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers, the questions wording will result in a set of quantitative data (Putnam and Rock, 2018). Additionally, the wording of the 25 questions will be a result of the Situational Leadership frameworks developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1974, 1977, 1982), then revised and updated by Cherry (2019). All 25 indicators focus on the relationships of the alternatively licensed Special Education teacher within the K-12 educational setting.

As the data are collected for analysis, Putnam and Rock (2018) indicated that quantitative data are a comprehensible research design to use. The data provide information that delineates the ability for verification among the sample group. Additionally, the data provide conclusive evidence through the research design, analyzing the statistical data to recognize patterns, trends, and causation when the variables are properly identified to solidify reason for alternatively licensed Special Education teacher retention. Identifying the association between alternatively licensed Special Education teachers and the retention rates will support the students in public schools with the highest educational needs (Tiplic, et al., 2014).

Rationale for Selection

Plano Clark and Creswell (2015) states when the number of participants in the population sample is greater than fifteen, the primary researcher should consider using a quantitative design method. A quantitative Likert rating scale has been selected to distribute the 45 plus alternatively licensed Special Education teachers who have remained in their positions more than one year. The group was selected to identify what leads to successful retention. Questions in the Likert scale are written with retention in mind, seeking why teachers stay in lieu of focusing on attrition.

The selection of the survey participants was not random, but was based on the enrollment of several cohorts in the alternative licensure program (Newblom, 2013). Bell et al. (2010) state the alternative licensure programming requirements to be enrolled in a state approved Special Education teacher licensure program while concurrently working as the teacher of record in a local school district as the Special Education teacher. It is necessary that the alternative route to licensure program adhere to the outlined program requirements to be identified as alternative (Feistritzer & Haar, 2008). Survey participants were recommended by their Special Education director or individually sought out the alternative route to licensure program. The group of students have met all of the definition requirements of alternative licensure and programming creating a viable group to survey regarding their retention in their current K-12 Special Education teaching positions.

Participants in the study have all completed or are currently enrolled in an alternative route to licensure program. While all participants were enrolled in the program, participants were also working full-time as the teacher of record in the Special Education setting. Many of the participants worked as full-time paraprofessionals in the school building before enrolling in the program and being hired as the teacher of record. Some of the participants worked in other human services-related careers. All participants in the study have volunteered to participate and provided consent for the intent and purpose of gaining a clear and more comprehensive picture regarding teacher retention for alternatively licensed Special Education teachers.

Human Subject Approval – Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The researcher completed an Expedited Institutional Review Board approval completed by the university IRB review committee (Appendix A, Exempt-IRB Approval Form). After

receiving committee approval and IRB approval, the researcher distributed the Likert rating scale survey among the participants.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure

Plano Clark and Creswell (2015) emphasize that a researcher should use a data collection methodology that supports the rationale for collecting the data, such as school improvement, agency change, policy, or procedural updates. Quantitative research often assesses for attitudinal measure, which a Likert scale measures effectively, resulting in dependable responses from the participants (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). By selecting the Likert scale for the data collection instrument of choice, and having a participation group of larger than 15, the data will be cohesively gathered for analysis.

The researcher has selected to distribute the survey to participants electronically to gain the largest response rate. The quantitative research design using the Likert rating scale created within Qualtrics will be distributed to participants via email and text messages. Participants were required to provide consent for survey participation. Surveys were collected between February 11th, 2021, and February 18th, 2021. After one week and reaching an exceeding the minimum participation rate of 25% for quantitative research, the rating scale was turned off to analyze the data collected (Creswell, 2013). The response rate exceed the necessary rate of 25%. The rating scale was turned off to analyze the date after the duration of one week.

The rating scale was distributed to the participants electronically on February 11th, 2021, via a Qualtrics link that could be accessed via smartphones or computers. Participants were asked to read over the consent form asking for participation permission and selected a yes or no response to record consent. If participants selected no, the rating scale ended. If yes was selected, an explanation of the purpose and how the data being collected would be used. Participants were

provided with the name and contact information of the primary researcher (Appendix B).

General demographic information was collected to identify trends and patterns in responses to gain a better insight into retention rates. Demographic information collected includes:

- Gender: Non-binary/Third Gender; Trans; Female; Male; Prefer not to say
- Age: 20-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-59; 60-69; Prefer not to say
- Ethnicity: Caucasian; Black/African American; Latino/Hispanic; Asian; Native American; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; Two or more; Other/Unknown; Prefer not to say
- Total number of children in the household/family and ages: 0-5; 6-18; 18 +
- Partnership status: single; married/domestic partnership; widowed; divorced; separated; prefer not to say
- Years of residence within a 100-mile radius of where you currently reside: 1-3; 4-7; 8-11; 12-15; 16 +
- Years in current school district as a teacher: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10+
- Years in current school district overall: 1-3; 4-7; 8-11; 12-15; 16 +
- Total years in K-12 education: 1-3; 4-7; 8-11; 12-15; 16 +
- School district location: Rural (population less than 10,000); Suburban (population between 10,000 to 100,000); Urban (population over 100,000)

The survey instrument's validity and reliability were piloted among 13 non-educational professionals (Gall et al., 2007). After reviewing feedback on the survey instrument, adjustments were made to reflect a clearer understanding of the questions being asked. The survey instrument was re-submitted to the dissertation chair for review and approval.

Data Analysis

Using numerical quantities to analyze the Likert scale results from the Qualtrics survey, identifying both positive and negative trends will provide the researcher with perspective into the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. In examining two quantitative components, such as administrative support and teacher retention, finding meaning through the statistical methodology of analysis will validate the associations between variables.

Limitations

Limitations to the study includes the student population enrolled in the alternative route to licensure program through the same university during the same time frame for the three cohorts. Two of the four cohorts completed the program together, the third cohort will complete the program in the spring of 2021, and the fourth cohort is concurrently enrolled in licensure courses while hired as the Special Education teacher of record in the district. All participants belong to the same higher education institution and reside in the same state. With the stated limitation, the program's results may be influenced by the alternative route to licensure. The data will be analyzed for such limitations to vet out trends associated with the alternative route to licensure programming compared to the job itself.

Summary

The Likert scale's instrumental use, the data collected in the research study, and questions provide insight into the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. With the quantitative research design method, the data analysis will result in as authentic a representation as possible from the participants. All participants are alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. In Chapter IV, the results will be analyzed, and findings delineated for trends to answer the research questions and provide insight into the hypotheticals.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

Attrition in the field of public-school education continues to be detrimental to school subject areas that are already impacted by chronic teacher shortage (McKee, 2003; Miller, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). There are financial implications for districts when new teachers are hired (Feistritz & Haar, 2008). A high teacher turnover rate has been found to be connected to the decline in student growth (Berry & Gravelle, 2018; McKee 2003; Nolan, 2013; Versland, 2013). Identifying the root cause of why alternatively licensed Special Education teachers have one of the highest attrition rates for K-12 teachers will benefit students and school districts. Heineke, et al. (2014) review the many benefits of teacher retention for the students, the teachers themselves, and the school district. When teachers stay, the gains and benefits are greater for all (Anthony, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2017).

Research Problem

Much of the current research identifies why alternatively licensed Special Education teachers attrit, leaving a research gap regarding retention (Chapa, 2012; Clement, 2017; Maranto & Shuls, 2012; Plash & Piotrowski, 2006; Rosenberg, et al., 2004). Through the Situational Leadership theory, Graeff (1983) validated the model created by Hersey and Blanchard and the leader's role, which contributes to attrition and retention. Investigation into why teachers stay or do not stay will create a win-win-win for students, teachers, and educational leaders (Berry & Gravelle, 2018; Heineke, et al., 2014; Welch, 2018).

Research Question

The research question that may begin to address the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers in various communities is:

RQ: To what extent do alternatively licensed Special Education teachers perceive their relationships with students, parents, teachers, and administration as a predictors of retention?

H: Positive student, parent, teacher, or administrator relationships with an alternatively licensed Special Education teacher contributes to the career longevity and retention of the educator.

Method

To determine the methodology, a multitude of research designs and methods were examined, including a quantitative approach. A quantitative research design was selected and implemented through the distributing a Likert scale survey to the participants (Putnam & Rock, 2018). The survey questions were written to examine the relationship an alternatively licensed Special Education teacher has with various individuals within a public-school setting.

The use of two identifiers *Agree* and *Disagree*, with a series of questions were distributed to the alternatively prepared Special Education teacher sample. The survey question wording is directly reflective of the research question, thus resulting in original data collection. Putnam and Rock (2018) synthesized the importance of question and statement wording to yield authentic responses, thus necessitating the ability to decipher the influence of the respondents' answers.

Findings

The survey tool was sent out to 47 alternatively prepared Special Education teachers in February of 2021. The number of respondents during the one week the survey was open was 32. With an “n” of 32, the response rate was 68.1%, exceeding the minimum required response rate for research through a Likert scale instrument (Creswell, 2013). All participants who engaged with the survey agreed to participate at a rate of 100%. The instrument did not record any response of non-agreement to participate.

Data gathered in the survey represent the participants gender, age, ethnicity/race, children/dependents, marital status, years of residence, and public-school employment history. The survey participants provided the following demographic information: 24 females, eight males; one African American/Black, 31 Caucasians; 11 do not have or have not had dependents, 21 have had dependents or do have dependents; nine reported single status, three reported divorced, 20 reported a married/domestic partnership; 11 reported residing in a rural community, 13 reported residing in a suburban community, eight reported residing in an urban community.

The survey tool was sent out to teachers in their first year as an alternatively licensed Special Education teacher and alternatively licensed teachers who have fully completed the licensure program. The national average for individuals to be considered as an alternatively licensed Special Education teacher is nine months, one academic year (Redding & Smith, 2016).

Table 1 shows that, 83.87% of the teachers surveyed have exceeded the national norm. Twelve of the 32 teachers surveyed have remained in their districts for four and five years, with two teachers remaining six years and seven years.

Table 1 *Percentage of respondents years in current school district as a teacher.*

Years in current school district as a teacher	Percentage	Count
1 Year	16.13%	5
2 Years	35.48%	11
3 Years	3.23%	1
4 Years	19.35%	6
5 Years	19.35%	6
6 Years	3.23%	1
7 Years	3.23%	1
8 Years	0.00%	0
9 Years	0.00%	0
10 + Years	0.00%	0
Total	100%	31*

*One participant did not provide a response to the question, *Years in current school district as a teacher.*

Longevity and retention in school districts result in benefits for the students, staff, and administration (Bobek, 2002; McKee, 2003; Versland, 2013; Heineke et al., 2014). Twenty-six of the 32 participants have exceeded the national norm for longevity. Table 2 shows that over 50% of the participants have been employed in the districts for over four years. Some respondents have been in their current districts for as long as eight to eleven years. Thirteen of the 32 participants have remained employed by the current district for the duration of one to three years. Many of the districts tenured faculty at three years, thus resulting in continued retention.

Table 2 *Percentage of respondents years in current school district overall.*

Years in current school district overall	Percentage	Count
1 – 3 Years	40.63%	13
4 – 7 Years	46.88%	15
8 - 11 Years	12.50%	4
12 - 15 Years	0.00%	0
16 + Years	0.00%	0
Total	100%	32

Further analysis of the total years spent in K-12 education (Table 3) documents the total time employed in a K-12 school setting. Employment may include working as a paraprofessional, social worker, or other K-12 personnel positions. Three of the 32 individuals have been employed in a K-12 setting for over sixteen years. The largest percentage of participants have been in K-12 education between four and seven years. In total, 26 of the 32 participants have contributed to the K-12 educational system for four or more years.

Many of the participants started their career in the K-12 public school setting prior to enrollment in the alternative program. Many began as paraprofessionals and transferred into the role as the classroom teacher when they concurrently were enrolled in the alternative licensure program. Table 3 demonstrates the amount of time each of the participants has spent overall in the K-12 educational setting.

Table 3 *Percentage of respondents total years in K-12 education.*

Total years in K-12 education	Percentage	Count
1 - 3 Years	18.75%	6
4 - 7 Years	62.50%	20
8 - 11 Years	6.25%	2
12 - 15 Years	3.13%	1
16 + Years	9.38%	3
Total	100%	32

The Likert scale survey instrument was developed to gather the survey participants' demographic data, and 25 questions were designed to examine influential factors associated with retention based on leadership within the public-school setting. The 25 Likert scale questions were devised on a two-point scale of *Agree* or *Disagree*. Sarantakos (2005) asserts the number of points in a Likert scale reflects the variation associated with the degree to which the question is developed. The participant must decide if the statement does or does not influence the current position's retention rate.

Alternatively licensed Special Education teachers were asked the influential factors regarding longevity in the current district. Table 4 shows the student relationships/engagement and parent relationship/engagement demonstrated the highest rating and the lowest. Student relationship/engagement resulted in 100% of the participants indicating the influence on their career longevity and retention. Conversely, parent relationship/engagement demonstrated the lowest level of influence throughout all of the assessed factors. Only 68.75% of the respondents rated the parents level of engagement in the students' learning as a contributor to retention.

Table 4 *Percentage of respondents regarding stud/teac & parent/guardian influence on longevity.*

Question	2 – Agree		1 – Disagree		Total
Student & Teacher relationship interactions	100.00%	32	0.00%	0	32
Parent/Guardian & Teacher relationship interactions	84.38%	27	15.63%	5	32
Parent/Guardian & Teacher communication	90.63%	29	9.38%	3	32
Parents/Guardian level of engagement in their child's learning	68.75%	22	31.25%	10	32

The influence of a mentor teachers' interaction and support reported by the alternatively licensed Special Education teacher retention and longevity in all five areas assessed, on average, is reported to be a greater influence than not. In all five areas, over 80% of the respondents agreed that the mentor teacher's feedback and support contribute to the longevity and retention in the district's current positions. The noteworthiness of the mentor teacher and alternatively licensed Special Education teacher's relationship demonstrate a great significance. However, other surveyed retention factors have a higher rate of influence.

Eight factors associated with building principals in connection with teacher retention and longevity were assessed. Of all of the questions and data gathered, the two highest factors beyond working with students were identified in the section dedicated to principal support. Table 5 shows with a 96.88% agreeance, 31 of 32 participants agreed the influence of the *principal's support throughout the year* and the *principal's overall support* were the influential factors for retention and longevity.

Table 5 *Percentage of respondents by principal influence on longevity.*

Question	2 – Agree	1 – Disagree	Total	
Principal’s personal interactions with you	93.55%	29	6.45%	2 31
Principal’s availability to discuss questions/concerns with you	96.77%	30	3.23%	1 31
Principal’s support at the beginning of the year	93.75%	30	6.25%	2 32
Principal’s support throughout the year	96.88%	31	3.13%	1 32
Principal’s informal feedback	90.63%	29	9.38%	3 32
Principal’s formal observation feedback	78.13%	25	21.88%	7 32
Principal’s overall support	96.88%	31	3.13%	1 32
Principal’s building collaborative culture across all contents/grades	87.50%	28	12.50%	4 32

The relationship with the building principal through various forms of connectivity as represented in Table 5, shows that initial connection at the beginning of the year, support throughout the year, and overall support are highly influential factors regarding retention. One participant did not respond on the two indicators regarding personal interactions and availability to discuss questions and concerns resulting in slightly lower percentages in these two areas. However, the response rate of those who did answer resulted in a 96% agreement rate on three of the indicators.

While still ranking with high percentages as influencing factors for longevity and retention, Table 6 shows the Special Education director's support and feedback came statistically lower in importance than the principal’s support and feedback. Across the six variables evaluated, the range of agreement for the 32 participants reported 81.25% to 90.63% on variants. The influence of the Special Education director’s relationship is significant; however, the principal's relationship with the alternatively licensed Special Education teacher continues to demonstrate a greater influence on retention and longevity.

Table 6 *Percentage of respondents regarding Special Education director influence on longevity.*

Question	2 – Agree		1 – Disagree	Total	
Special Education Director’s personal interactions with you	84.38%	27	15.63%	5	32
Special Education Director’s availability to discuss questions/concerns with you	87.50%	28	12.50%	4	32
Special Education Director’s support at the beginning of the year	81.25%	26	18.75%	6	32
Special Education Director’s support throughout the year	87.50%	28	12.50%	4	32
Special Education Director’s feedback	84.38%	27	15.63%	5	32
Special Education Director’s overall support	90.63%	29	9.38%	3	32

The Special Education directors support is viewed by participants to play a factor in their retention rates, but at a lower rate than other leadership positions with which the participants interact. All participants responded to all indicators, with the highest agreeance rate falling lower than 88% of the principal indicators.

Participants access to professional development opportunities and the increased confidence developed from participation were reported as influential in retention and longevity in current positions. With 93.75% agreeing the access to professional development increased confidence in instructional strategies, only 81.25% reported having access to professional development influenced retention.

Synthesis

Of the 25 indicators assessed regarding the rationale for retention and longevity of the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers, several items can be highlighted. The research question focused on perceived relationships with students, parents, teachers, and administrators. The clearest influence on retention with 100% agreement among participants (n=32) is the student-teacher relationship.

The second-highest reported influencer on career longevity and retention comes from the relationship the with the building administrator. Over 97% of the participants responded that ongoing support and feedback from the building administrator affects their retention. While other factors influence retention and longevity, the building principal being invested in alternatively licensed Special Education teachers is the strongest indicator for continual retention and career longevity. The other twenty-two indicators that influence alternative teacher longevity and retention are still strongly represented through professional development, mentor teacher support, and Special Education Director relationships. However, the two relationships with the greatest impact on alternatively licensed Special Education teacher retention are the student relationships and the building principal's support and relationships.

Summary

Chapter IV summarizes the findings and analysis of data obtained from 32 alternatively licensed Special Education teachers who have maintained career longevity and retention beyond the one-year national norm (Redding & Smith, 2016). Twelve demographics were collected from respondents as were statements of agreement or disagreement on 25 indicators influencing the decision to stay or go (Kelchtermans, 2017). The data tables and charts reflect the statistical descriptions and percentages of the respondents. In Chapter V, an analysis of the results and recommendations for further research and studies will be presented.

Chapter V: Discussion

Introduction

Retention of Special Education teachers continues to be a chronic concern (Boe & Cook, 2006). Identifying the factors that influence the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers is essential to student success (Bobek, 2002). Alternatively prepared Special Education teachers attrit at an eight percent higher rate than traditionally prepared Special Education teachers, resulting in one of the highest teacher attrition rates in public education (Redding & Smith, 2016). Understanding why the attrition rates are so high, and what factors influence retention is necessary for students, teachers, and districts growth. In Chapter V, the survey results will be discussed. Additionally, topics for further research will be identified. Not only is it imperative that Special Education teachers continue in the field, but it is also important for them to continue teaching in their current positions and districts.

Research Question and Design

While there are many reasons for teachers to leave the education profession, the current study focuses on the relationships of various individuals with the teachers and how these relationship may affect longevity. Through the Situational Leadership Theory, Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1974, 1977, 1982) synthesized how a leader's role influences the outcomes of the professionals they lead. Cherry (2019) adds to the original theory by requiring the leader to adapt to the needs of those in their workforce. In the examination of the survey findings, two indicators associated with positive relationships with building principals emerged as most important compared to all others. Alternatively licensed Special Education teachers agree at a 97% response rate that the building principal's availability to discuss questions and concerns

influences their retention. Additionally, 97% of the respondents agree that the support, specifically the building principal support throughout the year, contributes to their retention.

Examination of the research question:

RQ: To what extent do alternatively licensed Special Education teachers perceive their relationships with students, parents, teachers, and administration as a predictor of retention?

The data provides suggestive evidence that accessibility to and support from the building principals influence the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers' retention.

Results of Study

The Situational Leadership theory has been developed and updated over the last half century. Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1974, 1977, 1982) highlighted leadership indicators necessary for successful professional relationships. In 1986, Reddin identified two leadership social constructs employees need from their leaders to create job satisfaction and retention. The two social constructs consist of employee acceptance from the leader and employees feeling a part of the organization (Reddin, 1986). In 2002, Goleman et al. again solidified the influence of the leadership style on retention, while Cherry (2019) suggests leaders should adapt their leadership style to meet their employees' needs in efforts to increase retention rates.

When the Individuals with Disabilities Act was originally passed in 1975, the implications for Special Education teacher retention was most likely not of concern. However, as the need for appropriately licensed Special Education teachers increased in the 1980s, alternate routes to licensure were developed (Feistrizer & Haar, 2008; Newblom, 2013). As research has emerged on alternatively prepared teachers, much of the focus has been on attrition, not retention

(Devney, 2017). Examining and implementing relationship factors that positively influence alternatively prepared Special Education teachers will start to close the current literature gap on attrition versus retention.

Chapter IV data demonstrate the strongest relationship influences on retention are derived from the students and the building principal. As the K-12 public school buildings' leaders, principals who are keenly aware of the need for connectivity and belonging retain their alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. Those who do not will spend much time and money hiring new Special Education teachers each year (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

The results of the study are based on survey results sent out to 47 alternatively licensed Special Education teachers in a midwestern state in February of 2021. A total of 32 surveys were completed - a response rate of 68%. The Likert scale survey was designed to examine the relationships between the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers and their reasons for retention. Kelchtermans (2017) asserts, the variation types of relationships within the educational setting are a factor that influences Special Education teachers' retention. Additionally, all survey participants were asked a series of basic demographic information to assess for predictors of retention.

The study results suggest the relationship alternatively licensed Special Education teachers feel is most influential on their decision to stay with their students. One-hundred percent of the respondents reported that they continue in their career longevity because of the students. Secondly, the building principal's relationship influences retention at a 97% agreement rate of the 32 survey participants. The highest percentage in all indicators demonstrates when alternatively licensed Special Education teachers feel supported throughout the year by their building principal, they are more likely to continue employment in their current position.

Additionally, when the building principal is available for questions and concerns, retention increases.

Limitations

Plano Clark and Creswell (2015) assert a limitation to be an impending weakness or concern within the study itself that cannot be predicted or mitigated within the conclusion. Limitations can be identified regarding the participant's willingness to contribute, resulting in a low "n". Other limitations may include but are not limited to, the ability to trust the participants' responses and overall generalization. While it is believed that participants who completed the study did so to the best of their ability, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic may be an influential factor on respondents' answers.

As with many studies, the number of participants is considered a limitation. While the participation rate of 68% is relatively high, the number of teachers the survey was distributed to was low. The total number of distributed links to the survey was 47, resulting in 32 respondents. With the development of the mid-western alternate route to licensure, there were a limited number of viable participants to survey. With the program being in the initial stages of cohorts, access to a higher number of alternatively prepared teachers through the university with the alternate route to licensure program did not exist.

Another limitation of the study is the participants themselves. All participants were enrolled or are currently enrolled in the same higher educational institution offering the alternate route to licensure courses. As with many higher educational institutions, admission requirements must be met for program admittance, thus resulting in a homogeneous group of students who meet the university's graduate requirements. Additionally, the course instructors have all been

from the same department, again contributing to the participants uniformity in understanding of Special Education pedagogical approaches and content. Furthermore, participants were required to complete a support form with district administration informing them of their concurrent enrollment in the Special Education alternative licensure program. With the requirement of the administrative documentation for program admission, the paperwork process alerted the building leaders to the participants enrollment in an alternative route to licensure program.

Implications for Current Practices

Situational Leadership demonstrates the influence leaders have on employees. When leaders are invested in their staff, they [the staff] stay. In a thorough examination of the Situational Leadership theory, creating a sense of belonging and acceptance results in a group of educators doing their best to support and teach students of all ability levels (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1974, 1977, 1982; Reddin, 1986; Cherry 2019). Programs have been developed to *Grow Your Own* based on teachers desiring their leaders' connection and acknowledgment. The study shows teachers stay when they feel a connection to their administration and feel appreciated, respected, and acknowledged.

Student success is a continual conversation among administrators, teachers, parents, educational members, and other community members. Finding a solution to the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers' high attrition rates can greatly impact student success. The survey data show one of the ways to mitigate high attrition rates is for the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers to feel year-round support from their building leader. When teachers feel supported, they stay. When there is a lack of support, teachers leave. When they leave, the students are the first to suffer.

In lieu of continually needing to hire new Special Education teachers, building leaders could instead spend time, energy, and resources to keep the ones they already have. If administrations took the time to evaluate the cost and time associated with hiring new teachers each year, versus supporting those who have already been hired, they would see the cost-effectiveness of keeping teachers (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). Additionally, teacher retentions connected to the K-12 student's benefit is equally measurable (Allen, 2005; Berry & Gravelle, 2018).

As the fostering of relationships between the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers and principals begins to occur, principals and Special Education directors will start to see their Situational Leadership styles emerge based on the current staff. They know adjustments will be made, and when the faculty needs change. By utilizing the research, principals and Special Education directors will be able to mitigate attrition and increase retention and career longevity of teachers with the highest turnover rate (Kelchtermans, 2017; McKee, 2003; Versland, 2013).

Future Research Recommendations

Recommendations for future research regarding the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers include the following:

1. A qualitative study analyzing the rationale for each teacher's individual retention when it exceeds the national norm of one year.
2. Examination of the retention of alternatively licensed General Education teachers based on the support of the building principal.

3. Examining, and comparing to alternatively licenses Special Education teachers the retention of traditionally trained Special Education teachers and General Education teachers based on the support of the building principal.
4. A qualitative study of building principals regarding the understanding of the supports necessary to retain alternatively licensed Special Education teachers.
5. Using the Sense of Place theory (Table 7 and Table 8) to examine each individual's proximity to their school to determine if residential location influences longevity in all school teachers.
6. The examination of individuals physical geographical location of urban, suburban and rural through a mixed methods approach would allow for data analysis associated with the Sense of Place theory (Table 7 and Table 8).

Table 7 gathered data from the participants regarding their residential proximity over certain durations of time. Over 50% of the participants have maintained residence within a 100-mile radius for over 16 years. Further research in the theory of Sense of Place may start to pull other factors into the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers career longevity.

Table 7 Percentage of respondents years of residence within a 100-mile radius of where you currently reside.

Years of residence within a 100-mile radius of where you currently reside	Percentage	Count
1 – 3 Years	3.13%	1
4 – 7 Years	18.75%	6
8 - 11 Years	3.13%	1
12 - 15 Years	21.88%	7
16 + Years	53.13%	17
Total	100%	32

Table 8 demonstrates an almost equal distribution of participants across all three geographical regions. While the program was originally developed for rural districts, the data shows current and past students reside across all three populated areas.

Table 8 *Percentage of respondents school district geographical location.*

School district geographical location	Percentage	Count
Rural (population less than 10,000)	34.38%	11
Suburban (population between 10,000 to 100,000)	40.63%	13
Urban (population over 100,000)	25.00%	8
Total	100%	32

7. The completion of a qualitative research study of the survey participants who selected the age range of 30-39 and 40-49 to analyze data for retention associated with their current age bracket (Table 9). Are middle aged alternatively licensed Special Education teachers more likely to maintain their position due to similar life factors associated with their current age bracket?

The data in Table 9 breaks down the participants into age brackets. Additional research examining the alternative teachers age may demonstrate reasons for career longevity as well. Nearly 70% of the participants indicated their age bracket to be beyond the age range of traditional undergraduate students. Research regarding the alternatively licensed Special Education teachers age and career longevity may be an viable indicator as well.

Table 9 *Percentage of respondents by age.*

Age	Percentage	Count
20-29	31.25%	10
30-39	25.00%	8
40-49	40.63%	13
50-59	3.13%	1
60-69	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
Total	100%	32

Summary

Many agree that retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers continues to impact the Special Education field (Tiplic, et al., 2015). The direct impact of low teacher retention is seen through the lack of student success contributed by high teacher turnover (Kelchtermans, 2017; McKee, 2003; Versland, 2013). Conclusions drawn from the study indicate a possible solution lies within the leaders of the buildings. When teachers feel supported overall and throughout the year, they stay. In conjunction with Growing Your Own programs, future retention rates for alternatively licensed teachers could exceed the current national norms for the teacher attrition rates in Special Education (Barley, 2009; Newblom, 2013). Creating a public-school setting for students with exceptionalities where the teachers want to stay is the ultimate goal. It all starts with preparing and supporting the teachers; and great leaders do just that.

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Appendix A: Winona State University IRB Approval Form

Winona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Human Protections Administrator
Maxwell 161
Winona, MN 55987
507.457.5519 or bayers@winona.edu

DATE: February 10, 2021

TO: Meghan Sinning
FROM: Winona State University IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1656001-1] Pathways to Retention of Alternately Licensed Special Education Teachers

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The Primary Reviewer has determined this project is exempt from further review according to federal regulations and you may begin your research.

While your project is exempt from further review, you must report to the IRB any significant modifications in your protocol, consent form, and/or data collection tool(s). All serious and unexpected events, non-compliance, or complaints must also be reported to this office. Use the report form in IRBNet Forms and Templates and refer to the file reports section in the "How to" guidelines.

We will retain a copy of all your submitted materials and a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the Human Protections Administrator at 507.457.5519 or bayers@winona.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within the Winona State University IRB records.

Appendix B: Survey Recruitment Letter

Survey Participant,

I am requesting your assistance with a study conducted by myself as a doctoral student at Winona State University regarding the retention of alternatively licensed Special Education teachers. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate, and you must be enrolled or were enrolled in an alternate route to licensure program for your Special Education license. The study will take you approximately three to five minutes to complete. If you are unable to respond within the first week, I will send you a reminder. If you do not want to participate, please let me know to ensure you do not continue to receive reminders.

The study is anonymous, so please refrain from entering any identifying information into the research instrument. As the researcher, I pledged to keep your data confidential and securely stored. I will only be reporting aggregated results in my dissertation.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. If you have any questions, you may contact me at any time:

Meghan W. Sinning, M.Ed.
Winona State University
175 W. Mark Street – Winona, MN 55987
507-457-5535
msinning@winona.edu

Appendix C: Survey

Factors that influence alternative Special Education teacher retention.

Please evaluate the following statements regarding if the provided variables influencing your longevity in your current district.

<i>The survey should take approximately 3 to 5 minutes to complete</i>	2 Agree	1 Disagree
Student & Teacher relationship interactions		
Parent/Guardian & Teacher relationship interactions		
Parent/Guardian & Teacher communication		
Parents/Guardian level of engagement in their child's learning		
Mentor teacher's personal interactions with you		
Mentor teacher's availability to discuss questions/concerns with you		
Mentor teachers support at the beginning of the year		
Mentor teachers support throughout the year		
Mentor teachers feedback		
Principal's personal interactions with you		
Principal's availability to discuss questions/concerns with you		
Principal's support at the beginning of the year		
Principal's support throughout the year		
Principal's informal feedback		
Principal's formal observation feedback		
Principal's overall support		
Principal's building collaborative culture across all contents/grades		
Special Education Director's personal interactions with you		
Special Education Director's availability to discuss questions/concerns with you		
Special Education Director's support at the beginning of the year		
Special Education Director's support throughout the year		
Special Education Director's feedback		
Special Education Director's overall support		
Access to professional development opportunities		
Professional development opportunities increased my confidence in implementing effective instructional strategies		

Appendix C: Survey Continued

Survey Demographics to collect:

- Gender: Non-binary/Third Gender; Trans; Female; Male; Prefer not to say
- Age: (20-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-59; 60-69; Prefer not to say)
- Ethnicity: (Caucasian; Black/African American; Latino/Hispanic; Asian; Native American; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; Two or more; Other/Unknown; Prefer not to say)
- Total number of children in the household/family and ages: (0-5; 6-18; 18 +)
- Partnership status: (single; married/domestic partnership; widowed; divorced; separated; prefer not to say)
- Years of residence within a 100-mile radius of where you currently reside: (1-3; 4-7; 8-11; 12-15; 16 +)
- Years in current school district as a teacher: (1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10+)
- Years in current school district overall: (1-3; 4-7; 8-11; 12-15; 16 +)
- Total years in K-12 education: (1-3; 4-7; 8-11; 12-15; 16 +)
- School district location: Rural (population less than 10,000); Suburban (population between 10,000 to 100,000); Urban (population over 100,000)

Appendix D: Additional Demographic Data

Table 10 *Demographics chart of participants.*

Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5-1	Q5-2	Q5-3	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
F	30-39	C	0	2	0	M/DP	12 - 15 Years	4 Years	4 - 7 Years	12 - 15 Years	R
F	30-39	C	0	2	0	M/DP	12 - 15 Years	2 Years	1 - 3 Years	1 - 3 Years	R
F	20-29	C	0	0	0	S	16 + Years	2 Years	1 - 3 Years	1 - 3 Years	S
F	20-29	C	0	0	0	S	1 - 3 Years	1 Year	1 - 3 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
F	30-39	C	1	2	0	M/DP	16 + Years	6 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
M	20-29	C	0	0	0	S	16 + Years	2 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	R
F	20-29	C	1	0	1	S	16 + Years	2 Years	4 - 7 Years	1 - 3 Years	U
F	40-49	C	0	4	0	M/DP	16 + Years	5 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
F	40-49	C	0	1	1	D	16 + Years	4 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
F	30-39	C	0	0	0	M/DP	16 + Years	4 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
F	20-29	C	0	0	0	M/DP	16 + Years	2 Years	1 - 3 Years	1 - 3 Years	S
F	20-29	C	0	0	0	M/DP	4 - 7 Years	2 Years	1 - 3 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
F	40-49	C	0	2	0	M/DP	16 + Years	5 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
F	40-49	C	1	2	0	M/DP	12 - 15 Years	2 Years	1 - 3 Years	16 + Years	R
F	50-59	C	0	0	0	S	16 + Years	3 Years	1 - 3 Years	16 + Years	R
F	40-49	C	0	2	0	M/DP	16 + Years	5 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	R
M	30-39	C	0	0	0	S	4 - 7 Years	5 Years	8 - 11 Years	8 - 11 Years	S
M	30-39	C	0	2	0	M/DP	8 - 11 Years	4 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	U
M	30-39	C	0	0	0	M/DP	4 - 7 Years	4 Years	8 - 11 Years	4 - 7 Years	U
F	40-49	C	0	0	1	D	12 - 15 Years	5 Years	1 - 3 Years	4 - 7 Years	R
F	20-29	C	0	0	0	S	16 + Years	2 Years	1 - 3 Years	4 - 7 Years	U
M	30-39	C	0	0	2	M/DP	16 + Years	1 Year	1 - 3 Years	1 - 3 Years	S
F	40-49	C	0	1	0	M/DP	12 - 15 Years	1 Year	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	R
M	20-29	C	0	0	0	S	4 - 7 Years		1 - 3 Years	4 - 7 Years	R
M	40-49	C	2	2	0	M/DP	4 - 7 Years	1 Year	4 - 7 Years	8 - 11 Years	U
F	40-49	C	0	2	0	M/DP	12 - 15 Years	4 Years	8 - 11 Years	16 + Years	U
M	40-49	C	0	0	3	M/DP	16 + Years	2 Years	8 - 11 Years	4 - 7 Years	R
F	40-49	C	1	2	0	M/DP	12 - 15 Years	1 Year	1 - 3 Years	1 - 3 Years	R
F	40-49	C	0	2	0	M/DP	16 + Years	5 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	U
F	20-29	C	1	0	2	M/DP	16 + Years	2 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
F	40-49	B/AA	1	10	0	D	16 + Years	7 Years	4 - 7 Years	4 - 7 Years	S
F	20-29	C	0	0	0	S	4 - 7 Years	2 Years	1 - 3 Years	4 - 7 Years	U

Demographic key.

Q2	Gender
Q3	Your Age
Q4	Your Ethnicity: Black/African American (B/AA); Caucasian (C)
Q5.1	Total Number of children in the household/family and age 0-5 Age Group
Q5.2	Total Number of children in the household/family and age 6-18 Age Group
Q5.3	Total Number of children in the household/family and age 18+ Age Group
Q6	Partnership Status: Single(S); Married/Domestic Partnership(M/DP); Divorced(D)
Q7	Years of residence within a 100 – mile radius of where you currently reside
Q8	Years in current school district as a teacher
Q9	Years in current school district over all
Q10	Total years in K-12 education
Q11	School District Geographical Location: Rural (R); Suburban (S); Urban (U)