Arkansas Tech University Online Research Commons @ ATU

Theses and Dissertations from 2017

Student Research and Publications

Spring 5-1-2017

Hire, Train, Retain: Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage

Cody Lee Chatman Arkansas Tech University

Follow this and additional works at: https://orc.library.atu.edu/etds_2017

Part of the Special Education and Teaching Commons

Recommended Citation

Chatman, Cody Lee, "Hire, Train, Retain: Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage" (2017). *Theses and Dissertations from 2017*. 3.

https://orc.library.atu.edu/etds_2017/3

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research and Publications at Online Research Commons @ ATU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations from 2017 by an authorized administrator of Online Research Commons @ ATU. For more information, please contact cpark@atu.edu.

HIRE, TRAIN, RETAIN: ADDRESSING THE ARKANSAS SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER SHORTAGE

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate College Arkansas Tech University

in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in School Leadership

in the Center for Leadership and Learning of the College of Education

May 2017

Cody Chatman

Bachelor of Arts, Arkansas Tech University, 2005 Master of Education, Arkansas Tech University, 2009 Educational Specialist, Arkansas Tech University, 2012

Dissertation Approval

This dissertation, "Hire, Train, Retain: Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage," by Cody Chatman, is approved by:

Dissertation Chair:	
	John Freeman Professor, Center for Leadership and Learning
Dissertation Committee	
	Tim Carter Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
	Mark Gotcher Deputy Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education
Program Director	
	John Freeman Professor, Center for Leadership and Learning
Graduate College Dean	Mary Gunter Dean, Graduate College

Permission

Title: Hire, Train, Retain: Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage
Program: School Leadership
Degree: Doctor of Education
In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfillment for a graduate degree from Arkansas Tech University, I agree the library of this university shall make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for extensive copying for scholarly purposes may be granted to my dissertation chair, or, in that professor's absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the Graduate College. To the extent that the usage of the dissertation shall be given to me and to Arkansas Tech University in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my dissertation.
Signature
Date

© 2017 Cody Chatman

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the following:

To my son, Holden Chatman, who arrived on April 4, 2016. Holden, I can't believe you are almost a year old already. You were a gift from God, and I love you more and more every day. I hope as you grow, you learn to love the value of family, friends, and a life-long education. For these are some the most valuable things in life.

To my wife, Becky Chatman. Though I don't say it nearly enough, I love you. You have pushed me to succeed, even when I felt like giving up. You put up with my endless whining, piles, and piles of research throughout the house, and the countless hours I spent at my computer researching and writing. I know there were times you had to be frustrated, but you supported me regardless. Without your continued encouragement, I would not have made it this far.

To my father, Ken Chatman, step-mother, Kim Chatman, and mother, Pam Baker. The life lessons you have taught me have led me to this point. As a child, I never saw myself here and honestly; you probably didn't either. Throughout my life, each of you has taught me many lessons, but one lesson you all emphasized was the value of hard work. Admittedly, I am not the smartest person in the world. In fact, my motto is "if I am the smartest person in the room, there is a problem." However, you taught me at an early age that with hard work I can accomplish anything. The love and guidance you have given me have made the man I am today. Thank you for everything!

Lastly, in loving memory of my grandmother, Linda Atwell, and grandfather, Kenneth Chatman, who passed away during my first year of this degree program. They touched my life in more ways than I can count and they are both missed dearly.

Acknowledgements

It is with great pleasure I this opportunity to acknowledge the many people that helped me throughout this dissertation journey.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Freeman, Dr. Chadwick, Dr. Gunter, and the faculty and staff of the Arkansas Tech Center for Leadership and Learning for providing me the opportunity to take part in this wonderful program. Your knowledge, leadership, and guidance were invaluable to me throughout the entirety of my Master's, Specialist, and Doctoral programs. Even though the road was extremely tough at times, I loved every step of the journey. I will always be a Wonderboy!

Next, I would like to thank my committee chairperson, Dr. John Freeman for his time, patience, guidance, encouragement, and feedback throughout my dissertation journey. I would also like to acknowledge my other two committees members, Dr. Mark Gotcher and Dr. Timothy Carter, for assisting me throughout this process. To Dr. Mark Gotcher, thank you for always being there when I need you. You are a true friend, mentor, and someone I will always look up to. Thank you for carving time out of your busy schedule to provide me with sound advice, words of encouragement, and for challenging me to do better. To Dr. Timothy Carter, thank you for agreeing to be on my committee, for your recommendations for improvement, feedback, and support.

To my classmates, The Fabulous 14, we did this together. Thank you for sharing this experience with me. Your friendship will be forever valued. You are all wonderful educators, and I wish you the best as we part ways at the end of this journey. Though we may not see each other nearly as often, I hope that we can all keep in touch throughout our career and assist each other when needed.

Abstract

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to identify factors affecting special education teacher recruitment and retention throughout the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region. This study contains both quantitative and qualitative survey data from 30 public school districts and 401 special education teachers currently serving in the field. The survey, deployed over a 30-day period, contained a series of multiple choice, Likerttype, and open-ended questions that were analyzed by the researcher to answer seven research questions. The results of this study indicate that perceptions of job commitment do not differ significantly based on the demographic characteristics of special educators. Yet, data did suggest that a special educator's teaching role does play a role in their level of job commitment. According to the data, special educators serving in the self-contained teaching role were found to be more committed than those teachers serving in inclusion. This study suggests that special educators who are satisfied with their current position are more committed to their jobs and will teacher longer. However, stress was negatively correlated with both job satisfaction and career longevity. Data also indicates that paperwork issues, workload issues, lack of administrative support, and low salaries were the most prevalent reasons given for wanting to exit the profession. Less than 50% of respondents indicated that their intent was to stay in the profession for longer than three to five years. Of those wanting to leave the field of special education, the most frequently selected reasons were retirement, to teach in general education, and to seek employment outside of the field of education. To recruit and retain more special educators, respondents suggest offering additional financial incentives, which the majority of schools within this region do not currently offer. Increased support and

paperwork assistance were also frequently suggested ways to improve recruitment and retention efforts. Additionally, this study found that special educators are often intrinsically motivated and enter the profession due to their love for special education students.

Table of Contents

PERMISSION	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Background of the Study	2
Problem Statement	10
Purpose of the Study	11
Significance of the Study	12
Research Questions	12
Definitions	13
Assumptions	15
Delimitations	15
Limitations	16
Summary	16
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	18
Theoretical Foundation	18
Introduction to the Literature Review	19
Special Education Teacher Shortage	20
Supply vs. Demand	21

Attrition of Special Educators	22
Increased Accountability	26
Increased Workload	28
Burnout	30
Retention and Recruitment of Special Educators	32
Beginning Special Education Teachers	33
Induction Programs	35
School Climate and Administrative Support	37
Salary and Incentives	40
CHPATER III: METHODOLOGY	42
Research Design and Rationale	42
Participant Sample	44
Instrumentation	45
Demographic Factors	47
Employment Factors	47
Job Satisfaction	48
Stress	48
Job Commitment	49
Career Longevity and Career Plans	49
Reasons for Wanting to Leave the Field of Special Education	49
Special Educator Recruitment and Retention Efforts and Incentives	50
Procedures	50
Data Collection	51

Data Analysis	53
Summary	55
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	57
Research Question One	63
Research Question Two	66
Research Question Three	67
Research Question Four	69
Research Question Five	71
Research Question Six	74
Research Question Seven	77
Summary	81
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.	82
Conclusions	84
Research Question One	84
Research Question Two	85
Research Question Three	86
Research Question Four	87
Research Question Five	88
Research Question Six	89
Research Question Seven	90
Implications and Recommendations for School Leaders and Policymakers	90
School Leaders	91
Financial Incentives	91

Administrative Support	92
Paperwork and Workload Issues	93
School Climate	95
Policymakers	96
Funding	96
Workload Issues	98
Recommendations for Future Research	98
Final Summary	100
REFERENCES	101
APPENDICES	113
Appendix A	114
Appendix B	114
Appendix C	116
Appendix D	118
Appendix E	122
Appendix F	124
Appendix G	126
Appendix H	127
Appendix I	128

List of Tables

Table 1: Arkansas Teacher Shortage Lists for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017	2
Table 2: Arkansas Licensure Waivers Requested in 2015-2016	5
Table 3: Alphabetized List of Districts by Educational Cooperative44	4
Table 4: Research Questions, Survey Questions, and Statistical Approach54	4
Table 5: Participating Districts, Number of Special Educators, District Contacts, and Educational Cooperatives	9
Table 6: Frequency Counts for Demographic Variables	1
Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Variables	3
Table 8: Scale Measures for Selected Variables	3
Table 9: Correlations for Selected Variables with the Job Commitment Scale65	5
Table 10: ANOVA tests of categorical variables with the Job Commitment Scale66	5
Table 11: Correlations among Selected Variables67	7
Table 12: Frequency Counts for Reasons Wanting to Leave Sorted by Highest Frequency	3
Table 13: Frequency Counts for Future Career Plans Sorted by Highest Frequency70)
Table 14: Frequency Counts: Themes for Suggestions for Improving Special Education Teacher Retention and Reducing the High Rate of Turnover	2
Table 15: Frequency Counts: Incentives Districts Currently Offer to Attract Special Education Teachers by Highest Frequency	5
Table 16: Frequency Counts for Reasons Special Education Teachers Chose to Enter the Field by Highest Frequency	8

List of Figures

Figure 1: Education Preparation Programs (EPP) Enrollment Trends by Program Type3
Figure 2: Results from ADE Survey Regarding Special Education Paperwork Reduction. Time spent on ADE-required paperwork by percentage of respondents
Figure 3: Results from ADE Survey Regarding Special Education Paperwork Reduction. Percentage of time spent outside regular working hours by number of respondents8
Figure 4: Results from ADE Survey Regarding Special Education Paperwork Reduction. Paperwork negatively affects recruitment of special education teachers9
Figure 5: Results from ADE Survey Regarding Special Education Paperwork Reduction. Paperwork negatively affects instruction
Figure 6: Results from ADE Survey Regarding Special Education Paperwork Reduction. Paperwork is a negative barrier to increasing student outcomes

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

There is a growing demand across the country for special education teachers.

According to the National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (NCPSSERS) fact sheet (2014), currently 49 of our 50 states suffer from special education teacher shortages. Therefore, the students identified as needing the most assistance, are lacking educators willing to teach them. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that school districts, communities, business partners, and politicians work together to research and develop creative ways to recruit and retain special educators.

Cross (2015) defines teacher shortage as specific grades, subject matter, type of discipline, or geographic area in which the Secretary of Education shows that there is an inadequate supply of elementary or secondary school teachers. The Office of Postsecondary Education uses a combination of the following information to determine what certification areas are included for each state annually: (a) teaching positions that are unfilled; (b) teaching positions filled by teachers certified by irregular, provisional, temporary, or emergency certification; and (c) teaching positions filled by teachers who are certified, but are teaching in academic subject areas other than their area of preparation.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, special education teachers have been placed on the Arkansas Teacher Shortage list each year since the list's inception in the 1990-1991 school year (Cross, 2015). Therefore, the special education teacher shortage has been a consistent and ongoing issue facing Arkansas schools for over 25 years. Even today, the special education teacher shortage still plagues the Arkansas

educational system. For the 2015-2016 and the 2016-2017 school years, Arkansas once again classified special education as a critical shortage area (see Table 1).

Table 1

Arkansas Teacher Shortage Lists for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017

2015-2016	2016-2017
Art	Art
Family & consumer sciences	Family & consumer sciences
Foreign language	French, Spanish
Library media	Library media
Mathematics	Mathematics
Special education	Special education
Drama / speech	Agriculture science & technology
Gifted & talented	Computer Science
	Physical science (chemistry, physics)

Note. 2015-2016 Arkansas Teacher Shortage List adapted from "Critical Academic Licensure Shortage Areas 2015-2016 School Year," by the Arkansas Department of Education. 2016-2017 Arkansas Teacher Shortage List adapted from the Arkansas Department of Education (I. Pfeffer, personal communication, November 7, 2015).

Background of the Study

Arkansas, like many other states, is struggling to find certified teachers to fill its classrooms. According to the State of Arkansas' Bureau of Legislative Research (2016), presently there are 57,940 people who hold a current Arkansas teaching license, while there were only 33,104 certified teachers employed in Arkansas schools during the 2014-2015 school year. While these numbers do not indicate a severe teacher shortage, many of these licensed teachers are retired, on the verge of retirement, are licensed in oversaturated areas, or work in other fields outside of education.

Data provided by the Educator Preparation Performance Report and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) for the Bureau of Legislative Research Report on Teacher Recruitment and Retention (2016) concerning educator preparation programs (EPP) provide additional areas of concern. According to the report, the combined student enrollment in both traditional and non-traditional teacher preparation programs has declined 36.3% over the past five years, from 8,255 in 2010 to 5,258 in 2015. While student enrollment rose in non-traditional teacher preparation programs by 43.3% from 1,188 in 2010 to 1,703 in 2015, student enrollment numbers in traditional teacher preparation program dropped by 50% from 7,067 students to only 3,555 over the same period.

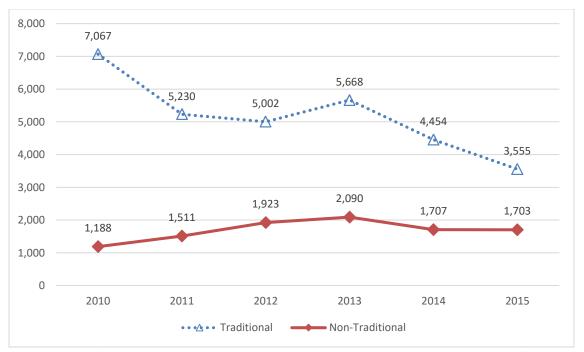


Figure 1. Education preparation programs (EPP) enrollment trends by program type. Adapted from Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016, p. 3.

The University of Arkansas' Office for Educational Policy (2005) suggests that Arkansas is facing a teacher *sorting* or *distribution* problem, rather than an actual shortage. This is where the number of teachers is over-saturated in some certification

areas. Meanwhile, other areas remain scarce. Due to this uneven teacher distribution, many teachers end up working in other certification areas while pursuing an alternative licensure plan (ALP).

The Arkansas Department of Education (Arkansas Department of Education, n.d.) defines an ALP as a waiver request filed with the Office of Educator Licensure for each teacher employed outside of his or her current licensure area. Each ALP must also be accompanied by a plan of study to add the licensure area required for the area in which they are employed within a three-year period. The ALP process may be used by Arkansas schools to address unusual emergency situations where licensed teachers are needed to teach in areas for which they are not licensed.

For many schools in Arkansas, the ability to hire special education teachers on an ALP provides a much-needed option to address the shortage of certified applicants. In fact, data retrieved from the Arkansas Department of Education (I. Pfeffer, personal communication, November 7, 2015), depicts special education as one of the greatest teacher shortage areas throughout the state for which ALPs are needed. During the 2015-2016 school year, there were 1,376 Arkansas educators teaching on an ALP. Of those, 432, or 31.4%, were teaching on an ALP for special education services. For comparison purposes, this is nearly three times the number of the second largest ALP group, middle childhood core areas, which had 152 waivers granted. The following table lists the total licensure waivers requested in 2015-2016 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Arkansas Licensure Waivers Requested in 2015-2016

Out of area	Total	%	Out of Area	Total	%
Special education instructional specialist	432	31.40	Curriculum program administrators	20	1.45
Middle childhood core areas	152	11.05	English/language arts 7-12	19	1.38
Gifted & talented	112	8.14	Music	17	1.24
Guidance & counseling	98	7.12	PE/wellness/leisure – PE/health	17	1.24
Elementary education K-6	64	4.65	Business technology	16	1.16
Career orientation areas	61	4.43	District administrator	12	0.87
Library media specialists	57	4.14	Computer science	9	0.65
Building level administrator	54	3.92	ESL	8	0.58
Social studies	51	3.71	Family & consumer science	7	0.51
Mathematics 7-12	45	3.27	Foreign languages	6	0.44
Sciences (physical, earth, life)	37	2.69	Adult education	4	0.29
Drama/speech & endorsements	33	2.69	Agriculture science & technology	1	0.07
Journalism	22	1.60	Survey of fine arts	1	0.07
Art	21	1.53			
			Total	1,376	100

Note. Adapted from the Arkansas Department of Education (I. Pfeffer, personal communication, November 7, 2015).

The final report from the Arkansas Legislative Task Force (LTF) on the Best Practices for Special Education (2016) stated, "one issue districts have faced in providing special education is an inadequate supply of appropriately licensed special education

teachers who choose to teach in the field" (p. 11). According to the report, in 2014-2015 Arkansas school districts employed over 3,500 full-time special educators to serve the state's 55,874 special education students. The report also indicates there are 7,235 teachers licensed to teach special education in Arkansas. However, many of these licensed special educators are working in other certificated areas within education, are retired, or have chosen to leave the field of education altogether.

Before 2014, the certification process for special education in Arkansas required teachers to take 21 graduate hours, above and beyond their undergraduate degree, from a Master's level special education program. Therefore, Arkansas teachers were required to have an initial teaching license before they could add the special education endorsement. This not only discouraged teachers from entering the field but also led to an increase in teachers being placed on an ALP until they fulfilled all of their additional licensure requirements.

To increase the number of certified special education applicants as well as reduce the number of special educators on an ALP, in 2014 the ADE recently altered the licensure requirements for those teachers looking to add special education. First, they created a kindergarten through twelfth-grade special education endorsement which only requires a bachelor's degree. Teachers who pursue this undergraduate degree can go directly into the special education classroom without having to take any additional collegiate hours.

In addition to the bachelor's degree, the ADE created a kindergarten through sixth grade and a seventh grade through twelfth grade special education resource endorsement.

This endorsement allows already licensed elementary and secondary teachers within the

subject areas of English, math, or science the option of completing 12 additional graduate hours to become certified as opposed to the 21 hours that had been required previously. Lastly, the ADE created another path to licensure by allowing universities throughout Arkansas to offer a Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program targeting individuals considering the special education field, but who currently do not possess an Arkansas teacher's license. This program allows people outside of the field of education to obtain a master's degree in teaching special education.

Along with the recent rule changes affecting licensure, the ADE and the Legislative Task Force on the Best Practices for Special Education Final Report (2016) are presently reviewing the amount of paperwork currently required by special education teachers. According to the preliminary report, the goal of this process is to review and possibly reduce items deemed unnecessary or repetitive. To determine if paperwork reduction was deemed an important issue, the ADE surveyed special education supervisors throughout the state. Over 98% of all respondents said it was an important issue. One respondent stated "It is the top reason teachers tell me they leave special education. Special education teachers are trained to teach in a specialized manner, but don't have the time to do so due to paperwork."

Within the LTF report, special education supervisors were also asked to estimate the amount of time special educators spent on ADE required paperwork each week and if they could quantify the amount of time special educators spend on paperwork outside of regular school hours. Of those surveyed, 44% stated special educators spend three hours or more each week on paperwork, and 13% of all respondents said at least 75% of the required paperwork is completed by special educators outside of their regular work hours.

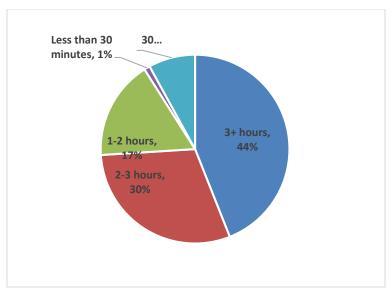


Figure 2. Results from ADE survey regarding special education paperwork reduction. Time spent on ADE-required paperwork by percentage of respondents. Adapted from LTF, 2016, p. 55.

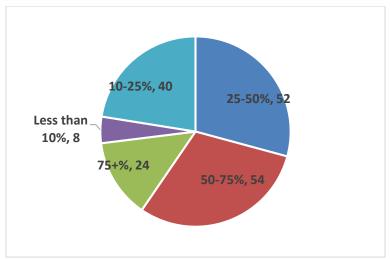


Figure 3. Results from ADE survey regarding special education paperwork reduction. Percentage of time spent outside regular working hours by number of respondents. Adapted from LTF, 2016, p. 55.

The report also noted that special education supervisors were asked if they believed the amount of paperwork required by special education teachers negatively affected the recruitment and retention of Arkansas special educators and their quality of instruction (LTF, 2016). Of those who responded, 96% agreed that the amount of paperwork does have a negative impact on recruitment and retention. Additionally, 90%

stated the amount of paperwork negatively affects instruction, and 82% said paperwork was a barrier to increasing student outcomes (LTF, 2016).

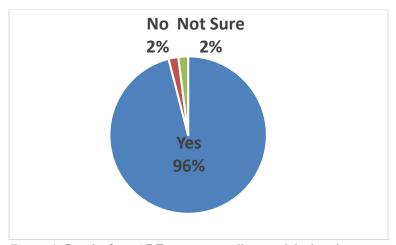


Figure 4. Results from ADE survey regarding special education paperwork reduction. Paperwork negatively affects recruitment of special education teachers. Adapted from LTF, 2016, p. 56.

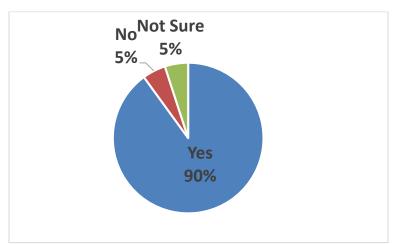


Figure 5. Results from ADE survey regarding special education paperwork reduction. Paperwork negatively affects instruction. Adapted from LTF, 2016, p. 56.

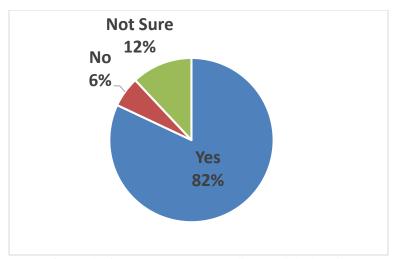


Figure 6. Results from ADE survey regarding special education paperwork reduction. Paperwork is a negative barrier to increasing student outcomes. Adapted from LTF, 2016, p. 56.

Problem Statement

The research literature in this area indicates that America is nearing a profound crisis in special education. The United States is suffering from a shortage of teachers who are qualified and willing to fill new and vacant positions (Rock & Billingsley, 2015). "The demand for special educators is expected to grow at about a 35% rate over the next ten years," per the Director of the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education at the Council for Exceptional Children (College Foundation of North Carolina, n.d.).

Because it will become increasingly important in Arkansas to attract, hire, and retain teachers for future generations of special education students, this study attempted to identify many of the relevant issues leading to the current shortage along with insight into many of the challenges that special educators face on a day-to-day basis. The research was also conducted to identify many of the current teacher recruitment strategies that are being used by both state and federal governments and individual school districts to help remedy the situation. Lastly, special educators themselves provided their

thoughts on why they believe the shortage exists along with suggestions they believe may help recruit and retain more teachers to the field.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to identify factors that affect special education teacher recruitment and retention within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region by: (a) identifying the extent, if at all, that perceptions of job commitment among current special teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region differ on the basis of demographic factors; (b) identifying the extent, if at all, that perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity are related to the perceived level of job commitment among special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region; (c) identifying the most frequent factors that current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region provide for wanting to leave the field of special education; (d) identifying what current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region indicate their future career plans to be; (e) identify the most frequently provided suggestions that special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region provide to help reduce the current high rate of turnover in the field of special education; (f) identifying the most common incentives, if any, that school districts within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region offer to attract/retain teachers to the field of special education; and (g) identifying the most common reasons special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region give for choosing to enter the field of special education.

Significance of the Study

According to the Arkansas Legislative Task Force on the Best Practices for Special Education Final Report, school districts within the state of Arkansas are currently experiencing an inadequate supply of licensed educators willing to teach in the field of special education (LTF, 2016). This study is significant because it added to the body of knowledge and created awareness for school leaders regarding the various factors that influence special education teachers' employment decisions. It is hoped that the findings from this study will provide Arkansas school districts and policymakers with information they may use to implement positive systemic changes in their efforts to increase special educator job satisfaction, recruitment, and retention.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine and identify factors that affect the recruitment and retention of special education teachers within Arkansas. Therefore, in an effort to find answers in this study, the following questions were addressed:

- 1. To what extent, if any, do perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region differ on the basis of demographic characteristics?
- 2. To what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to the perceived level of job commitment among current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region?
- 3. What are the most frequently selected factors that current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region give for wanting to leave the field of special education?

- 4. What do current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region indicate their future career plans to be?
- 5. What common reasons do current special education teachers suggest to help reduce the high rate of turnover in the field of special education?
- 6. What are the most common, if any, incentives that school districts within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region offer to attract teachers to the field of special education?
- 7. What are the most common reasons special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region chose to enter the field of special education?

Definitions

The following terms have been defined to provide clarity for the reader as they appear throughout the study:

Attrition: The term attrition refers to special educators who leave the teaching profession altogether or to those who choose to transfer out of special education and into other positions within education (Billingsley, 2004b).

Burnout: The term burnout refers to teachers being under high degrees of stress for extended periods of time (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014).

Highly qualified: An educator who has a degree, an appropriate teaching license and has demonstrated content knowledge in the subject area being taught (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The Federal statute that requires states to provide all eligible students with disabilities with a free appropriate

public education from infancy through the age of 21 (LTF, 2016). IDEA was reauthorized on December 3, 2004.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A written plan for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised in accordance with federal and state regulations (LTF, 2016).

Induction: In Arkansas induction refers to the period of time beginning with a teacher's first employment as the teacher of record in an Arkansas public school, education service cooperative, or organization that requires an Arkansas teaching license. During this induction period, the novice teacher is provided mentoring support and accelerated professional development (Arkansas Department of Education, 2015).

Inclusion: The term inclusion refers to a general classroom setting where students with a disability learn alongside their peers without disabilities (Ford, 2013).

Mentoring: In the state of Arkansas mentoring refers to the support given to a novice teacher by an experienced mentor teacher for the goal of increasing teacher retention rates and instructional skills (Arkansas Department of Education, 2015).

Novice teacher: In the state of Arkansas, a novice teacher refers to any licensed teacher of record with less than one school year of classroom experience in a public school (Arkansas Department of Education, 2015).

Professional development: In the state of Arkansas professional development refers to a coordinated set of planned, learning development activities for teachers based on research, standards-based and meets the focus areas for professional development required by the Department of Education (Arkansas Department of Education, 2015).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for this research study:

- Each teacher participating in the survey will answer the questions honestly, representing his or her true feelings and/or perceptions.
- 2. Participants are willingly participating in this study, not being mandated to so as a condition of their employment.
- 3. Only those teachers currently teaching in the field of special education will complete the survey.

Delimitations

Geographically this study will be delimited to include only the 36-member school districts of the Northwest Arkansas and Guy Fenter Educational Cooperatives. The researcher chose not to include any other educational cooperatives or districts throughout Arkansas due to proximity and convenience with a limited timeframe. However, the results from this study may be applicable to other school districts in other geographical areas throughout the state of Arkansas if similar circumstances and demographics are evident.

Secondly, the study did not seek to obtain data from school administrators, special education supervisors, general educators, or former special education teachers that are no longer in the field. Only those teachers currently teaching in the field of special education were asked to complete the survey. By delimiting the survey to current special education teachers, the researcher hoped to avoid misinformation being reported from those not currently in the special education field.

Limitations

Due to the participant sample being limited to only include the 36-member school districts of the Northwest Arkansas and Guy Fenter Educational Cooperatives, the results from this study may not be generalized to include other school districts or regions within the state of Arkansas. To generalize the results of this study to other school districts or regions throughout Arkansas, participant samples from other regions needed to include special educators from every educational cooperative across the state. Also, many of the questions within the survey are either multiple-choice or Likert-type, with predetermined categories which may not allow participants to provide more in-depth answers they may be willing to provide.

Another limitation of this survey was the low response rate that on-line surveys are susceptible to, even though the researcher sent multiple reminders to possible participants. Participation in the survey was not mandatory. Some teachers may have chosen not to participate due to lack of interest, time, or they may not feel comfortable sharing their personal feelings about their profession. Therefore, data could only be collected from those special education teachers who voluntarily completed the survey.

Summary

Within chapter one, the researcher introduced and provided background for the study. Additionally, chapter one contained the purpose of the study, its' significance, research questions, definitions of relevant terms, assumptions, delimitation, and limitations of the study. Chapter two contains the theoretical framework for this study along with a detailed review of the literature pertaining to special education teacher job satisfaction, recruitment, and retention.

The methodology for this study can be found in chapter three. Included within this chapter the researcher addresses the research design and rationale, the participant sample, instrumentation and survey design, and procedures for how data was collected and analyzed. Chapter four then presents the findings and statistical analysis for each of the seven research questions contained within the study. Lastly, chapter five of this study contains the final conclusions of this study, implications and recommendations for school leaders and educational policymakers, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This study aimed at researching the current recruitment and retention process of special education teachers within Arkansas school districts. The findings from this study will assist Arkansas' educational leaders in identifying current challenges and relevant issues that may have led to the shortage of special education teachers attempt to and identify key factors that contribute to their decision to remain in special education or to leave their special education classrooms. Findings will also provide Arkansas schools with research-supported solutions to help schools fill vacant positions and hire highly qualified personnel to address the rising number of special education students.

Theoretical Foundation

Frederick Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, found in his 1959 book titled *The Motivation to Work*, forms the primary theoretical basis for this research study. Job satisfaction for special educators may be a consideration for them remaining in their profession. Herzberg's Motivational-Hygiene Theory, also referred to as the two-factor theory, distinguishes between factors that motivate people and leads to job satisfaction, as opposed to those that lead to job dissatisfaction. Herzberg conducted extensive research to determine what factors led employees to have positive and/or negative feelings about their jobs. According to Herzberg, gratification increased job satisfaction. When employees were no longer gratified, job satisfaction went down.

Herzberg's original work focused on 200 engineers and accountants in Pennsylvania. From his study, he noted five critical factors that led to the perception of job satisfaction within the workforce. Those five factors were: (a) achievement;

(b) recognition; (c) the work itself; (d) responsibility; and (e) advancement. Within that same study, Herzberg determined that supervision and salary expectations led to dissatisfaction among employees. He labeled those factors that contributed to satisfaction as "motivators" and those that caused dissatisfaction as "hygiene factors."

According to Dinham and Scott (1998), Herzberg's work tends to group factors influencing job satisfaction into two categories. The first category, known as motivators, were intrinsic matters built into the work itself, such as achievement. The second category, referred to as hygiene factors, were extrinsic matters such as poor working conditions. Herzberg asserts that intrinsic motivators lead to gratification and job satisfaction as opposed to extrinsic matters which tended to lead to dissatisfaction. However, the absence of those same extrinsic hygiene factors did not necessarily improve job satisfaction.

Dinham and Scott (1998) further state that within education, intrinsic matters were associated with pupil achievement, teacher achievement, positive student outcomes and behaviors, recognition from others, mastery of content and skills, and positive relationships with students, peers, and parents. Extrinsic matters in education were associated with education policies and procedures, higher accountability and expectations, the declining status of teachers in society, new responsibilities, and increased workloads. These same intrinsic and extrinsic matters may correlate to the job satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction of special educators.

Introduction to the Literature Review

The focal point of this chapter is an extensive review of the literature surrounding the special education teacher shortage. Historical and current literature will be examined and discussed in an effort to understand the challenges that school districts face when attempting to recruit and retain special educators. Secondly, literature pertaining to the reasons special educators are choosing to leave the profession will also be examined. Lastly, this review of literature will address many of the current incentives that state and federal governments, along with school districts, are currently providing to special educators to fill vacant positions.

Literature searches were conducted using the reference guides provided by the Arkansas Tech University Library. The reference guides allowed the researcher access to online databases such as EBSCOhost and ProQuest. Professional, academic, and peer-reviewed journals, along with other print related materials and dissertations retrieved from these databases provided much of the information found in this literature review. Other search engines that were also used to generate the remainder of information found within this study were retrieved from Google and Google Scholar.

Special Education Teacher Shortage

The critical shortage of special education teachers has been a documented issue facing schools since highlighted in *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983). A Nation at Risk identified shortage areas in the subject areas of mathematics, science, and foreign language, as well as for gifted and talented, language minority, and handicapped students. Numerous researchers including Billingsley (2004a), Boe and Cook (2006), and Gehrke and McCoy (2007) have attempted to identify and curtail many of the issues contributing to the special educator shortage. However, 32 years after *A Nation at Risk*, society has yet to determine a solution to many of these teacher shortage areas including special education.

Billingsley (2004b) stated that compared to regular education teachers, special education teachers are almost two and one-half times more likely to abandon their careers. Many factors are associated with this high rate of job abandonment. Factors including increased paperwork, increased caseloads, insufficient planning time, inadequate support from administrators, stress, lack of professional guidance, low salaries, and an ever growing range of disabilities with students present in the school setting have been identified as contributing to higher burnout rates among special educators compared to general education teachers (Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002).

Supply vs. Demand

According to Thornton, Peltier, and Medina (2007), one of the greatest challenges facing special education is the issue of supply and demand. Since the inception of the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act in 1975, special education has suffered from a teacher shortage (Thornton et al., 2007). Between the years 1977 and 1995, the number of special education students across the country increased by 47% (Russ, Chiang, Rylance, & Bongers, 2001). During this period, as the demand for special education services rose, so did the need for fully certified special educators.

More recently, during the 2012-2013 school year, 6.4 million (13%) of all public school students received special education services (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). However, as evident as the demand for special educators is, there exists a critical shortage of qualified candidates to fill vacant positions (Thornton et al., 2007). Brownell, Hirsch, and Seo (2004) stated that the U.S. Department of Education under the Office of Special Education Programs spends an estimated amount of \$90 million every year in attempts to increase the number of special educators. Unfortunately, their costly

efforts have been insufficient in attracting ample numbers of special educators to the field.

Boe and Cook (2006) addressed the chronic and increasing shortage of fully certified special educators compared to general educators. They concluded that the shortage of fully certified special educators increased from 7.4% during the 1993-1994 school year to 12.2% in 2001-2002. Additionally, the number of fully certified special educators needed to fill vacant positions grew from 25,000 to 49,000 over the same period. Additional information from 2001-2002 retrieved by McLeskey, Tyler, and Flippin (2004) from the U.S. Department of Education revealed that 47,532 special education teachers lacked certification.

Further, Thorton, Peltier, and Median (2007) classified the special education shortage as a national epidemic. According to their study, of the 300,000 special education jobs across the nation, 36,000 positions will be filled by noncertified teachers or left vacant. The shortage is partly attributed to the fact that teacher training programs are not graduating enough special educators to keep up with demand. During the time the study was published, colleges and universities only graduated around 22,000 special educators annually. At that rate, demand exceeded supply by about 50%.

Attrition of special educators. Knowing there are a limited number of fully certified special educators graduating from college, one solution to the shortage is trying harder to retain teachers that are currently in the field (Thornton et al., 2007). Billingsley (2004a), stated that teacher attrition is a major contributor to the shortage. As special educators continue to leave the classroom, they must be replaced. As stated by Butler (2008), the dire need for special educators, especially in suburban and rural areas, has

created a problem for district human resources departments across the country.

Compounding the problem, the number of candidates applying for special education jobs is insufficient.

According to Billingsley (2004b), there are two different types of attrition, those leaving the teaching profession altogether and those transferring to other positions within education. Each year around 13.2% of special educators leaves their positions to pursue other career paths or move to general education (Plash & Piotrowski, 2006). Billingsley (2004b) stated that special educators, especially those certified in math and science, are more likely to leave the profession. Unusually high attrition rates have also been associated with those teaching children labeled as emotionally disturbed (Ax, Conderman, & Stephens, 2001).

Billingsley (2004b) and Boe, Bobbit, Cook, Whitener, and Weber (1997) suggested the most reliable predictor of teacher attrition is age, due to high rates of attrition for both younger and older teachers. Younger special education teachers have higher attrition rates than older special educators (Billingsley, 2004b). Plash and Piotrowski (2006) concurred, stating 29% of beginning special educators will leave their positions during the first three years, and 39% will leave within their first five.

According to Griffin and Kilgore (1998), novice special educators reported different problems than general education teachers. They felt insufficiently prepared, frustrated, and exhausted. Sobel and Taylor (2015) concurred. They stated that the training provided by teacher preparation programs is insufficient and for special educators to be able to implement inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy, they must have extended time and differentiated support beyond their initial preparation

program to become proficient. Therefore, one critical action administrators can take is to provide sufficient support for beginning teachers during their first few years, especially to those novice teachers who are not fully certified for the classes they teach. Creating easier job assignments, providing mentors, and providing helpful feedback to beginner teachers encourages greater commitment and a more satisfying teaching career (Billingsley, 2004b, Sobel & Taylor, 2015).

Data associated with special educator attrition revealed that 36.7% leave to escape teaching, 7.7% leave due to professional development reasons, 31.8% leave for personal reasons, and 16.5% retire. Another 10% of special educators leave to pursue jobs in general education (Leko & Smith, 2010). According to Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997), special educators leave their positions after approximately six years. More recent data provided by Sobel and Taylor (2015) suggested that the steep learning curve for special education teachers leads to 15% of new teachers exiting the field and an additional 14% changing schools after their first year. These extremely high attrition rates beg the question: Why are special education teachers leaving the field at such a high rate?

The Council for Exceptional Children (1998) concluded that poor working conditions in special education contributed to high rates of attrition, teacher burnout, and a substandard quality of education for special education students. Ansley, Houchins, and Varjas (2016) agreed with the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) perspective, stating that while many special educators enter the profession because they are fulfilled by the nature of their work, they must balance multiple roles that require high levels of physical and mental energy over time leading to chronic and persistent stress which adversely affects their wellness, job performance, and their student's outcomes.

According to Thornton et al. (2007), reasons that special educators leave the field can be categorized in the following general areas:

- 1. Employment terms which consist of economics, better salaries, job description, certification status;
- 2. The working environment which consists of job assignments, class loads, job stress, paperwork, lack of motivation, school environment, the students through their lack of motivation, discipline problems, and wanting student progress;
- 3. Support, whereby teachers require support from colleagues, school principals, and government support;
- 4. Personal matters which include the teacher's family, social life, lifestyle and housing issues, lack of enough professional support; and
- 5. Certification whereby some of the teachers do not have the right, and other factors like retirement benefits or better jobs (p. 234).

Billingsley (2004a) stated that this lack of retention is not only a concern for school district administrators but also for parents of special education students. The constant fluidity of their teachers threatens the quality of instruction that students with disabilities receive. The consequences of the shortage for students are many. School districts may raise class sizes or reduce services leading to an inadequate educational experience and reduced student achievement. As fully certified special education teachers leave their current positions, they are often replaced with beginning teachers who lack proper certification and training. If repeated, this cycle could result in special education students receiving years of limited services as teachers try and learn their new role (Billingsley, 2004a; Billingsley, 2004b; Connelly & Graham, 2009; Cooley Nichols

et al., 2008). Additionally, inexperienced and uncertified teachers express higher levels of stress and job dissatisfaction, which could lead to increased teacher turnover (Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, & Farmer, 2011).

Increased accountability. According to Johnson and Bonaiuto (2008), for our students to successfully achieve, there must be accountability. These authors describe accountability as the "catalyst that drives educational progress" (p. 26). In 2001, President George W. Bush reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and entitled it the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. NCLB was an attempt to assure the nation that the federal government was committed to the improvement of academic performance of America's schools.

The NCLB Act, along with amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), placed additional strains on special education teachers (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Nichols et al., 2008). NCLB legislation brought on increased accountability, more stringent expectations, and consequences for schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). NCLB required that all students, including special education students, perform at a level of proficiency as determined by the state by 2013-2014 (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Nichols et al., 2008).

Adding to the pressure from NCLB's increased accountability, IDEA's reauthorization extended the scope of services available to students, which in turn increased the number of pupils eligible for special education services (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Nichols et al., 2008). According to Ax et al. (2001), such legislative mandates have assisted millions of students with disabilities to receive the individual services they so desperately need. However, they have also thrust millions of students into special

education classrooms across the country, making it essential for schools to hire more teachers to an area that already suffers from a critical shortage.

Further, Harriman (2005) stated that school districts across the nation struggled to meet the requirements set forth by NCLB and IDEA as numbers of special education students increased and the percentage of students mandated to meet proficiency in math, science, and literacy increased each year. Schools that failed to meet AYP were labeled "schools in need of improvement," and sanctions were placed upon them by their individual states' departments of education with the sole focus on improving academic achievement. Each year more and more schools failed to make AYP under NCLB, which in turn increased the accountability placed upon educators to remediate struggling students (Harriman, 2005; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010).

According to Hochberg and Desimone (2010), the increased accountability for student achievement caused many teachers, especially special education teachers, high levels of stress in the face of demands for fast-paced improvement of student outcomes. They identified teachers feeling the need to stay on schedule with district instructional pacing guides and to prepare students to take high-stakes tests as key sources of pressure. Willis (1999) stated that schools today receive more criticism and scrutiny like never before. The schools along with the teachers are pressured by parents and the government to produce results that meet specific standards. In today's society, U.S. schools are criticized for being poor performing, hence the need for the schools to be "held accountable."

Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, and Kiely (2015) concurred with Hochberg and Desimone (2010) and Willis (1999). They stated today, more than any other time in

history, higher expectations are being placed on special education teachers. Along with their role in developing and supporting rigorous technology-rich content instruction, special educators and their students with disabilities are under increased pressure to meet high college and career ready standards. Many states, including Arkansas, have also adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS were designed to ensure that all students, including special education students, can compete successfully in a global economy. However, CCSS provide little guidance to teachers tasked with determining how to provide students with disabilities appropriate instruction to meet those high levels.

Along with the increased student accountability measures implemented by NCLB, special educators across the country were forced to obtain additional certifications to become "highly qualified" (Harriman, 2005; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; "NCLB Toolkit," 2009). "Highly qualified" was defined by NCLB as teachers who hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree, have obtained state certification, and have demonstrated subject-matter competency in each core content area they teach. NCLB legislation required that all teachers in core academic areas, including special educators, become "highly qualified" by the 2005-2006 school year. Subjects considered "core academic areas" under NCLB include English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography ("NCLB Toolkit," 2009).

Increased workload. According to Billingsley (2004b), not only are special education teachers being held more accountable, but their job assignments are becoming more involved. He stated that over time special educators could feel torn between teaching critical tasks they feel are necessary and time-consuming bureaucratic

requirements. Bureaucratic and non-instructional requirements, such as burdensome paperwork and lengthy meetings, provide limited time for special educators to spend focused on student instructional needs (Fore et al., 2002).

According to Goldstein (2003), a national study conducted in 2000 by the U.S. Department of Education found that special educators spend more time on paperwork, around five hours per week than on grading, communicating with parents, sharing with colleagues, supervising paraprofessionals, and attending meetings combined. Another critical issue that Goldstein pointed out was that special educators are not only responsible for the paperwork for the students they are assigned, but also for completing referral paperwork for struggling students in need of services, resulting in even less time spent teaching struggling students.

Nance and Calabrese (2009) stated the increased burden of addressing bureaucratic-driven issues, such as paperwork, adds an additional dimension to a special educators' stress level. On one hand, special education teachers enter their field because they feel compelled to work with children with disabilities. However, on the other hand, increasing legal requirements and additional paperwork responsibilities deny them from spending the needed time to assist their struggling students.

Adera and Bullock (2010) stated that roles and responsibilities for special educators vary by position and from school to school. The teacher's responsibilities range from; teaching academic skills such as math, science, and literacy to assisting students with developing vocational, social, emotional, and life skills needed for life outside of the classroom. Additional responsibilities include monitoring and implementing student modifications identified in each of their assigned students'

Individual Education Plans (IEPs). An IEP is a plan developed in conjunction with parents, teachers, and administrators to help students become successful in school. The IEP includes individual classroom modifications and services that should be implemented to meet the student's individual learning goals (University of Washington, Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, & Technology, 2015).

Special educators are also expected to monitor their students' grades in each of their subject areas and communicate with students, teachers, and parents regarding IEP modifications, expectations, and goals throughout the school year (Adera & Bullock, 2010). Teachers' heavy workloads combined with increased accountability, state testing, and pressure from administrators to complete tasks in timely manner precipitate high levels of stress and job dissatisfaction among special educators, often leading to burnout and teachers leaving the profession (Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

Burnout. According to Brunsting et al. (2014), teacher burnout is a major concern for special educators. Burnout occurs when teachers are under high degrees of stress for extended periods of time. They stated that "teachers are described as experiencing burnout when the stress they encounter overcomes their resources and abilities to cope adequately, leading them to feel exhausted, cynical, or unaccomplished" (p. 682).

Approximately 20 years ago, Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) associated burnout with behavioral, physiological, psychological, and attributional responses. Outcomes associated with burnout have been found to impact teachers' health resulting in chronic fatigue, depression, colds, recurrent flu, and musculoskeletal pain. Brunsting et al. (2014) similarly found that personal dissatisfaction with professional responsibilities,

changes in one's interpersonal interactions with others, and a reduced professional commitment and desire to leave their profession are also implicit with burnout.

Within the classroom, teachers suffering from burnout respond more negatively, are less task-oriented, are less likely to give positive reinforcements, are less focused on instruction and instructional interactions with students, and are less sensitive to the social, physical, and emotional needs of the students they serve (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). Factors identified by Brunsting et al. (2014) resulting in teacher burnout include lack of administrative support, paperwork, challenging student behaviors, and an overload of instructional and non-instructional duties.

Billingsley (2004b) and Brunsting et al. (2014) stated that role ambiguity and role conflict are also significant factors associated with burnout. Role ambiguity describes situations when the job descriptions and expectations are not made clear or necessary information is unavailable to teachers. Role conflict exists when the responsibilities or demands expected of special educators are conflicting, inconsistent, or seem impossible to complete.

According to Plash and Piotrowski (2006), role ambiguity is a major factor in special educator burnout because teachers are frequently uncertain about their job assignments, purpose, rights, and expectations. These elements can lead to misconceptions and a lack of clarity regarding teacher job descriptions. Likewise, role conflict adds to the emotional and physical fatigue to special educators by placing unmanageable and contradictory demands on their time.

Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) stated that providing additional assistance to teachers who exhibit signs of burnout is critical to keeping them in the field. Once the

burnout level is reached, educators direct their attention from their students to basic survival. Making it through the day becomes their first priority.

Fore et al. (2002) suggested that schools could reduce special educator burnout by implementing smaller class sizes; a reduction in paperwork; additional support from colleagues and administrators; adequate planning time; mentoring programs; meaningful professional development; and clearly defined job descriptions.

According to Ansley et al. (2016), learning how to manage stress is very individualized and that although there are multiple resources, there is no absolute one-size-fits-all formula. However, special educators are familiar with differentiating their teaching strategies and instructional resources to meet the individual learning needs of their students. Similarly, special educators could apply their skills in differentiation to create their own personal plan to cope with stress and burnout. Developing a personal plan to reduce thoughts and behaviors that cause stress with thoughts and behaviors that improve wellness is a good first step in becoming healthier.

Retention and Recruitment of Special Educators

Within the United States, the certified special education teaching pool has been in short supply for several years and as a result, many special education teaching positions remain unfilled, or they are filled with unqualified teachers (Billingsley, 2004a; Billingsley, 2004b; Boe & Cook, 2006; Westling & Whitten, 1996). According to Boe and Cook (2006), the chronic shortage of certified special education teachers has been averaging between 9-11% annually since at least the 1987-1988 school year. However, other estimates are much higher. Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997), stated that according to information obtained by the U.S. Department of Education in 1994, an estimated

28,000 special education teaching positions were being filled by less than fully certified teachers. That estimate represented 30% of the special educator workforce at that time. More recent estimates provided by the U.S. Department of Education (as cited in Higher Education Consortium for Special Education [HECSE] Shortages of Special Education Expertise, 2014) suggest that 11.2%, or roughly 45,514, special educators are currently filling positions that they are unqualified to teach.

A major reason for the shortage of fully certified special educators is the high percentage of trained professionals that exit the field within their first few years (Westling & Whitten, 1996). Westling and Whitten (1996) conducted a survey of 158 rural special educators to determine their plans for staying with or leaving their current positions. Of the 158 special education teachers surveyed, only 57% indicated they were likely to remain in their current role within the next five years. Therefore, the need to understand what influences special educators to stay, especially beginning special educators, is critical to reducing the shortage.

Beginning special education teachers. Whitaker (2001) estimates that 25% of beginning special education teachers do not teach more than two years and that 40 to 50% leave the teaching profession altogether within the first five years. According to Whitaker (2001), during these critical first few years, the novice teacher emerges from a student who is solely responsible for his or her own learning, to a teacher who is responsible for teaching others. Others described a teacher's first year this way:

New teachers aren't always prepared for the challenge they'll find in the profession. They enter the field expecting—and often being expected—to do what the veteran teacher teachers have been doing for years, with equal success.

They face long days, filled with little time for reflection and planning. They face children with problems they can't understand. They face a bureaucracy that forces them to teach a prescribed curriculum in a prescribed manner...Just months earlier, most of these new teachers were carefree college students, idealistic to a fault. If they're thrown into a classroom and expected to succeed with little or no support, it's no wonder many of them quickly become disillusioned. (Tonnsen and Patterson, 1992, p. 29)

What Tonnsen and Patterson (1992) described as a teacher's first year is often why novice teachers depart from the classroom after only a short period of time.

Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004) described a teacher's first year as a survival stage.

During their first year, beginning teachers focus on being liked by students, attempt to gain control of their classroom, and struggle with being evaluated by their supervisors.

Often, these teachers underestimate the time that teaching requires while also overestimating their own abilities and hold unrealistic expectations of themselves.

According to Jones et al. (2013), novice teachers have the most to gain from their school-based colleagues. However, because they are new to the field, they have few existing relationships from which to draw from. Therefore, they must attempt to build relationships, which is often hindered by their location within the school, the fact that they are not attached to a particular subject, and their access to other educators may greatly depend upon the disabilities of their students and the general education teachers their students are assigned.

Compounding the situation, Whitaker (2001) stated that novice teachers also face other challenges during their first few years. For beginning teachers, the available jobs

are often the ones that experienced teachers do not want, and the most challenging situations a teacher may ever experience are often encountered during their first year.

Instead of decreasing a first-year teacher's responsibilities or gradually increasing them over time, beginners are often given additional responsibilities, the least desired and most time-consuming courses to teach, extracurricular assignments that other teachers do not want, and the most challenging students.

In addition, Brownell et al. (2004) stated that well-articulated support systems for evaluating and developing beginning teachers are the key to success. Teachers are not finished products once they finish their teacher preparation programs. There must be an active partnership between those preparation programs and schools to provide clear goals and extensive professional development to continue developing their skills.

Induction programs. Due to beginning teachers being at risk of attrition during their early years, induction programs have become increasingly popular for advancing the retention efforts of novice teachers and for fostering their learning and growth (Billingsley et al., 2004). As we continue to garner a better research-based understanding of the major reasons why special educators are choosing to leave the field, administrators should focus their efforts on improving those factors to reduce attrition-related shortages and retain fully certified special educators who are already employed (Brownell et al., 2004; Leko & Smith, 2010). One such action that administrators are taking is designing systematic induction programs for beginning teachers (Billingsley, 2004b; Billingsley et al., 2004; Leko & Smith, 2010)

An induction program provides focused professional development to teachers during their first year in the field (Brownell et al., 2004). According to Billingsley

(2004b), induction programs aimed at beginning teachers should address a range of goals including facilitating teacher development; improving instructional outcome for special education students; reducing isolation and stress; and improving retention. Per Leko and Smith (2010), successful induction programs can reduce stress levels of novice teachers by providing a transition from pre-service to in-service teaching.

Further, according to Brownell et al. (2004), beginning teachers are among the most vulnerable to attrition and should be the target of any major effort to reduce it.

Special education teachers are even more of an attrition risk due to the demanding nature of the profession. Given the growing need for special educators and the complexity of their jobs, Brownell et al. (2004) stated that any effort to create induction programs for special educators must focus on strategies for including special educators in the broader school context and individualizing mentoring for each special educators' specific needs.

Whitaker (2000) also focused on special education teachers and their needs for a successful induction program. For special educators, Whitaker identified these four critical components as materials and resources need to be abundant and easily accessible; emotional support provided by a mentor; pertinent information being offered promptly; and information being provided relevant to the field of special education. Whitaker also argued that a mentor with special education experience is more important than having a general education mentor within the same school.

Whitaker (2000) further proposed that given the specialized nature of their job, novice special educators need to be assigned mentors that understand both special education policy and best practices. Within Whitaker's study, beginning special

education teachers stated that the mentors' knowledge was the most important characteristic in making the mentor-mentee partnership successful and beneficial.

More recently, Jones, Youngs, and Frank (2013) stated that special educators frequently receive little guidance on how to manage the many routines and tasks specific to their role in special education. These tasks in include managing relationships with their students with disabilities, interacting and planning with other classroom teachers throughout the day, creating and maintaining IEP's, employing assistive technology, and complying with federal special education laws. Therefore, novice special educators are likely to rely heavily on their special education colleagues for mentoring support during their first few years.

School climate and administrative support. According to Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001), teachers who view their schools as a good place to work are more likely to stay. Positive work environments are critical to special educators' job satisfaction and lead to increased retention. However, poorly designed work environments can affect teachers negatively, leading to isolation and eventually to leaving their positions. Billingsley (2004b) argued that if we are committed to building a qualified teaching force, particular attention to the working conditions of early career special education teachers is needed.

Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, and Westat (2002) found that special educators were more sensitive to differences in school climate than general education teachers. For many, the school climate was associated with teacher workload. They determined that schools with a positive atmosphere might be better organized, devote more attention to

instruction, and insulate teachers from an overload of non-instructional duties, thus counteracting some of the stress felt by special educators.

Additionally, Gersten et al. (2001) stated that administrators should design work environments that are supportive of the specific needs of special educators. Supporting and cultivating beginning special education teachers is a critical leadership activity that requires systematic efforts (Billingsley et al., 2004). Administrators can ensure that special educators have the essential resources and relevant information needed to be successful. Cross and Billingsley (1994) suggested principals are especially critical because teachers who receive support from their principal experience less stress and they also help shape teachers' roles by assigning them their teaching responsibilities, their room locations, and setting instructional expectations.

Correa and Wagner (2011) also emphasized the importance of the building principal in supporting his/her teachers. They stated that principals are critical components for creating positive school environments that support new teachers trying to meet the diverse needs of their students within their classrooms. Therefore, building administrators must build an atmosphere of trust and community among their teachers, especially with novice teachers. Effective principals assist in creating positive school climates and are committed to the success of all students and staff.

Regarding special education novice teachers, Correa and Wagner (2011) stated that if principals lack essential knowledge and experience with special education issues and cannot provide adequate support, their novice special educators are at a higher risk of leaving the profession. However, even if the principal does not have the background necessary to fully support novice special education teachers, they can still play a critical

role in the working environment by promoting a positive school climate, facilitating instructional leadership, and supporting induction and mentoring programs.

Leko and Smith (2010) focused on effective strategies to increase retention among practicing special educators, including those new to the profession. Their focus revolved around teachers contemplating leaving the classroom to escape stressful working conditions. Like Carlson et al. (2002) and Cross and Billingsley (1994), Leko and Smith (2010) determined administrative support and school climate may be the two most important factors related to retention. They found that administrative support plays possibly the most influential role in a teacher's intent to stay.

Special educators who perceived having high levels of administrative support were not only less likely to leave, but they were also more committed to their work and felt less stressed (Leko & Smith, 2010). Leko and Smith (2010) also concluded that establishing a supportive and attractive school environment could drastically increase the retention rates of new special educators. They suggested administrators should encourage school personnel to have positive and supportive attitudes toward students with disabilities by including them in regular classrooms and all school functions. They also recommended that all teachers should be ready to play their part and be understanding, supportive and patient with the students.

Leko and Smith (2010) and Duesbery and Werblow (2008) concurred that establishing a supportive and attractive school environment is the most important factor in retaining special educators. However, they determined that veteran and beginning special educators look at administrative support differently. Beginning teachers

associated support with the availability of resources and supplies, while student behavior and school climate were more important to veteran teachers.

Salary and incentives. According to Gehrke and McCoy (2007) and Smith and Ingersol (2004), to help alleviate the problem and attract and retain more teachers to fill vacant positions, many state governments, and school districts have begun providing incentives for special education teachers. Scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, higher salaries, additional supports, increased professional development opportunities, induction programs, and mentoring programs are being implemented across the country.

According to Billingsley (2004b), special educators need to be provided for in order for the job to look attractive and secure. Even though some studies suggested that salary is unrelated to turnover, he stated that three independent studies conducted in 1992, 1997, and 1999 concluded that special educators with higher paying jobs were more likely to stay than those being paid less. Billingsley (2004b) also stated that teachers are important contributors to human capital and without them, a country is essentially poor.

Across the country, teachers have significantly lower incomes compared to other professions given the amount of work they put in to help their students succeed (Billingsley, 2004b). Henke, Choy, Chen, Geis, and Alt (1997) concurred and pointed out that that districts and schools that cannot offer competitive salaries and benefits are at a severe disadvantage at hiring and retaining teachers. Consequently, smaller school districts in rural areas with lower salary schedules find it harder to employ teachers, especially teachers in high-needs categories such as special education, math, and science.

Both Billingsley (2004b) and Henke et al. (1997) suggested that higher compensation and stronger benefits packages are one of the major reasons teachers choose to leave one district for another or leave the profession altogether.

According to Nichols et al. (2008), states and individual school districts alike are finding new ways to provide incentives to attract new teachers and retain current teachers in critical shortage areas such as science, math, and special education. These incentives provide more money for teaching in critical shortage areas. Financial incentives include scholarships, forgivable loans, increased salaries, bonuses, and extended contracts.

Brownell et al. (2004) concluded that in the year 2000, approximately 450 bills addressing teacher recruitment were introduced in 41 states. Nearly half of those were aimed at providing scholarship or loan forgiveness to teachers in critical shortage areas. States are also allowing school districts to lure retired teachers back by enabling them to draw their full retirement while also drawing a full salary from the district (McLeskey et al., 2004). However, according to Billingsley (2004b), financial incentives such as teacher salaries and their effects on job satisfaction and retention for special educators remain unclear. What is clear is that despite these numerous efforts, there remains an issue in attracting sufficient numbers of special educators to fill vacant positions (McLeskey et al., 2004)

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter 3 describes the methodology that was used in this study to identify factors affecting special educator job satisfaction, recruitment, and retention within Arkansas. The findings from this study can be used to provide information to Arkansas school districts to assist them in better understanding underlying factors which positively or negatively impact special education teachers. An application to the Arkansas Tech University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was submitted and approved (Appendix A) prior to beginning this study. All ethical considerations related to research involving human subjects were followed including maintaining the anonymity of all survey participants.

Research Design and Rationale

This mixed methods study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data.

Creswell (2008) defined quantitative research as "educational research in which the researcher decides what to study; asks specific, narrow questions; collects quantifiable data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner" (p. 46). The quantitative data in this study was retrieved in the form of a survey. Survey data were interpreted, and findings were itemized in numerical form.

A survey design was appropriate for this study as it allowed data to be gathered quickly from a specific population of special education teachers in the geographic area of Northwest Arkansas. The purpose of the survey was to identify specific variables related to job satisfaction and respondents' decisions to enter, remain in, or leave the profession of special education. Surveys were distributed on-line, and data were collected over a

four-week period using SurveyMonkey®, a user-friendly web-based software system developed to conduct survey research. The advantages of using the online survey were its minimal cost, ease of use, the ability for participants to complete the survey at their own convenience, and the researcher was able to quickly retrieve the data.

SurveyMonkey® also allowed the researcher to keep the survey responses anonymous. No personal information, school names, or IP addresses from participants were collected. From the survey, quantitative data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted to find common variables and relationships between participants and the research topic of special educator recruitment and retention.

Along with quantitative numerical data, this study also included qualitative data. Creswell (2008) defined qualitative research as "educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner" (p. 46). Qualitative data were gathered in the form of answers to open-ended questions included in the survey.

Again, participants were kept anonymous within the qualitative research findings. Open-ended questions were asked through the SurveyMonkey® program, alongside quantitative questions. The open-ended questions provided the researcher with additional information and insight that otherwise might have been missed by other survey questions. Open-ended questions allowed participants to express personal feelings/beliefs related to their job satisfaction, professional supports, or any additional information the participant feels the need to share with the researcher regarding the profession of special education.

Participant Sample

Data were gathered from current special education classroom teachers working in the 36-member public school districts of the Northwest Arkansas and Guy Fenter Educational Cooperatives (see Table 3). The director of both educational cooperatives was contacted, Mr. Roy Hester for the Guy Fenter Educational Cooperative and Dr. Charles Cudney for the Northwest Arkansas Educational Cooperative, and invited to assist in the study. To assist in the study, each educational cooperative director was asked to endorse the survey study and provide the researcher a list of the superintendents and/or special education supervisors for each of their member districts.

Table 3

Alphabetized List of Districts by Educational Cooperative

Guy Fenter Educational Cooperative	Northwest Arkansas Educational	
	Cooperative	
Alma	Bentonville	
Booneville	Decatur	
Cedarville	Elkins	
Clarksville	Farmington	
County Line	Fayetteville	
Fort Smith	Gentry	
Greenwood	Gravette	
Hackett/Hartford Consolidated	Greenland	
Lamar	Huntsville	
Lavaca	Lincoln Consolidated	
Magazine	Pea Ridge	
Mansfield	Prairie Grove	
Mountainburg	Rogers	
Mulberry/Pleasant View Bi-County	Siloam Springs	
Ozark	Springdale	
Paris	West Fork	
Scranton		
Van Buren		
Waldron		
Westside		

The superintendent or special education supervisor for each district was then contacted by email to request permission to complete the study. Each district's superintendent and/or special education supervisor was also asked how they wanted to participate in the study from the following two options: (1) superintendents and/or special education supervisors could provide the researcher a complete list of current special education teachers working within their district, including email addresses, or (2) if superintendents and/or special education supervisors chose not to supply the researcher with individual teacher email addresses, they could elect to personally receive the survey and survey reminders from the researcher and then forward the email communication from the researcher to each of the special education teachers working within their district. Once approved, special education teachers within the participating districts were contacted through email either by the researcher or their district superintendent and/or special education supervisor and they were provided all available information before giving consent to participate.

Participating districts and teachers were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and no compensation would be provided. Participants were asked to complete an informed consent form before they were allowed to complete the online survey. Therefore, any district or teacher could refuse to participate. Additionally, participants could choose to exit the survey at any point without penalty.

Instrumentation

This study targeted teachers currently serving in the area of special education who work for the 36-member public school districts of the Guy Fenter and Northwest

Arkansas Educational Cooperatives, located in the Northwest corner of Arkansas. Data

were collected in one phase using a web-based survey tool, SurveyMonkey®, over a one-month period beginning in November and ending in December. The rationale for using SurveyMonkey's® web-based survey tool was its ease of use, cost efficiency, convenience, and time efficiency compared to traditional paper and pencil surveys.

Components of this study, including the survey, were replicated or adapted from previous studies conducted by Billingsley et al. (1992), Green (2011), and Theoharis (2008). Green's survey (2011) was adapted using questions from previous survey studies conducted by Billingsley and Cross (1992), Billingsley et al. (1995), and Theoharis (2008). Therefore, permission was sought from Green (Appendix B) and Billingsley (Appendix C) before the survey instrument was modified and deployed for use in this study. Multiple attempts were also made to request permission from Theoharis. However, a reply was never received.

According to Green (2011), to address validity and reliability, Theoharis (2008) used Cronbach's alpha to determine if the survey items measured the constructs for which they were designed. Alphas measuring above .70 were considered reliable and warranted further analysis and alpha scores measuring above .90 were deemed to be highly reliable.

In this study, current special education teachers near the geographic area of Northwest Arkansas were surveyed. The teacher survey contained a series of multiple-choice, Likert-type, and open-ended questions designed to highlight the factors that influence special educators to enter, remain in, or leave their positions. For most Likert-type rating scale questions, teachers were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, had no opinion or were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. However, for Likert-type

rating scale questions regarding job satisfaction, participants were asked if they were satisfied, very satisfied, had no opinion or were neutral, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. To find commonalities, the researcher counted the number of teachers that selected each response and calculated the percentage of respondents who selected each answer. The questions used in this survey can be found in the Special Education Teacher Survey (Appendix D).

Demographic factors. Like Billingsley and Cross (1992), Green (2011), and Theoharis (2008), this survey began by gathering demographic information about the participants. Survey items 1 – 9 were used to analyze factors related to special education teachers' demographics. Demographic data requested within the survey for analysis included the special educator's gender, race, years of experience, current special education setting and teaching role, and information pertaining to their current level of education and certification status.

However, unlike Billingsley and Cross (1992) and Green (2011), survey questions regarding the special educator's specific special education job placement, type of credentialing program they attended, marital status, and if they were the primary income earner of the family were not asked because they were not relevant to this research.

Instead, the researcher added two questions regarding Arkansas' alternative licensure process (ALP), including if the teacher had ever been on an ALP for special education or if they were currently serving on an ALP for special education.

Employment factors. Survey items 10-12 were used to analyze factors related to employment. Like Billingsley and Cross (1992), Green (2011), and Theoharis (2008), the researcher obtained special educator's perspectives regarding their current

employment in the areas of job satisfaction, stress, and job commitment. However, for the purpose of this survey, the researcher chose to eliminate questions regarding security and permanence, opportunities for developing new skills, and pride and respect received from family and friends from the job satisfaction section. Likewise, the researcher also combined or eliminated several of the questions regarding stress and job commitment to shorten the instrument for the participant and to avoid repetition.

Each section concerning employment factors was measured using a 5-point Likert-type rating scale. According to Green (2011) and Theoharis (2008), the Likert-type questions regarding job satisfaction had an alpha coefficient of .85, which is considered to be highly reliable. Likewise, the sections of the survey regarding stress and job commitment were also measured using a similar 5-point scale.

Job satisfaction. The area of job satisfaction (survey item 10) was assessed through survey questions regarding salary, benefits, workplace conditions, workplace challenge, and opportunities for growth within the field. Like Billingsley and Cross (1992), Green (2011), and Theoharis (2008), survey item 10 regarding job satisfaction employed a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). According to Green (2011), an alpha coefficient of .85 was derived from this 5-point Likert-type scale, which was considered very reliable.

Stress. Stress was assessed through survey item 11. For this survey item, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt pressured or stressed regarding their experiences as a special education teacher in the areas of workload, paperwork interfering with instructional duties and their job overall. Like Billingsley and Cross (1992), Green (2011), and Theoharis (2008), the researcher used a 5-point from 1

(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). According to Green (2011) and Theoharis (2008), a strong reliability rating with an alpha coefficient of .92 was derived from this scale.

Job commitment. The researcher assessed special education teacher's commitment to their profession using survey item 12. Special educators were asked to use a 5-point Likert-type scale to indicate their level of job commitment from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was modified from the 7-point Likert-type scale used by Green (2011) and Theoharis (2008), which had an alpha coefficient of .82 which was considered very reliable.

Career longevity and career plans. Again, like Green (2011), two survey questions (survey items 13 and 15) focused on the special educator's plans to remain in the field of special education. With permission, Green (2011) adapted these two survey questions from Billingsley. Validity and reliability of the survey questions were established by Billingsley et al. (1995). According to Billingsley et al. (1995) and Green (2011), the two survey questions regarding career longevity and career plans were reviewed by the Office of Special Education Programs, United States Department of Education (OSEP) and the Memphis City Schools and were field-tested with teachers in Virginia and Tennessee.

Reasons for wanting to leave the field of special education. Survey item 14 allowed the researcher to analyze the reasons why special educators may want to exit the special education teaching field. Like Green (2011), this survey question employed a multiple-response checklist containing some of the most common factors found in the literature that special educators give for leaving the field. Also, like Green (2011), the

researcher chose to add an open-ended option to allow participants to provide additional reasons for wanting to leave the field of special education if they so wish.

Special educator recruitment and retention efforts and incentives. Survey question 16 asked special educators for suggestions or incentives they believed districts could implement to improve special educator recruitment and retention. Survey question 17 asked about current incentive programs that districts may already have in place and if special educators feel they are effective in regards to attracting or retaining special educators. Survey question 18 assisted the researcher in understanding what draws special educators to the field. Survey question 18 was statistically compared to survey questions regarding job satisfaction and commitment to determine if any significant correlations existed between reasons special educators enter the field and their job satisfaction and commitment over time.

Procedures

The researcher contacted the director of each educational cooperative to give details about the research study and allow the directors to review the survey. After reviewing the study information and survey, they were asked to endorse the study by encouraging each of their 36-member public districts to participate. Each educational cooperative director was also asked to provide a detailed list of superintendent or special education supervisor's names and contact information for each of their 36-member public school districts.

After receiving the contact information for each of the 36-member public school districts, the researcher contacted each district individually to discuss the study, allowed them to review the survey, and asked permission to administer the survey to each of the

special education teachers that are currently working within their district. Once the district administrator agreed to allow the researcher to move forward with the survey, the researcher asked for a list of names and email addresses for each special educator within the district. However, if the district contact person did not feel comfortable releasing a list of names and email addresses, the researcher allowed the district contact to receive and forward all communications from the researcher to the special education teachers within their districts. Additionally, like the educational cooperative director, each district administrator was asked to encourage special education teachers within their district to complete the survey once received.

Then, beginning on November 4, 2016, the researcher emailed each of the special education teachers within the participating school districts to request that they complete the web-based survey. The email contained a greeting, a short description of the survey and how its results would be used, an explanation of how the survey would be kept confidential, and a link to the SurveyMonkey® instrument tool. After reviewing the email, special education teachers who wished to participate could access the informed consent form (Appendix E) and survey by clicking on the link provided. Follow up reminder emails were sent to all potential participants on November 16, 2016, and November 23, 2016. All potential participants received the reminder emails, even if they had already completed the survey. This was due to the researcher's choice not to track IP addresses through the SurveyMonkey® system to protect each participant's identity.

Data Collection

On October 26, 2016, the researcher sent recruitment emails (Appendix F) to each of the 36-member public school districts of the Guy Fenter and Northwest Arkansas

Educational Cooperatives. The recruitment email contained personal information about the researcher, the purpose and details of the mixed methods study, and the researcher's request to conduct the study within each district. For those districts that responded allowing the researcher to conduct the study, two follow-up emails were sent on November 4, 2016.

The first follow-up email (Appendix G) contained a thank you letter, thanking the contact for allowing the researcher to conduct the study. It also contained information regarding the follow-up email that was coming, information about the timeline and confidentiality of the research project, and a request for each district to send the researcher the number of special of education teachers within each district. The number of special education teachers was needed to assist the researcher with tracking the rate of response for the survey.

The second follow-up email (Appendix H) was forwarded to the special education teachers within each district that would qualify to participate in the study. Like the recruitment letter sent to each district's superintendent and/or special education director, the second follow-up letter contained personal information about the researcher, the purpose and details of the mixed methods study, a confidentiality statement, and the researcher's request for special education teachers to participate in the study. Attached to the bottom of the special education teacher recruitment email participants were provided a web link to the survey. Additional survey reminder emails (Appendix I) were also sent on November 16, 2016, and November 23, 2016.

Of the 36-member public school districts of the Guy Fenter and Northwest Arkansas Educational Cooperatives, the researcher hoped to obtain 90% participation, which equates to at least 32 member schools. Of those participating schools, the researcher hoped to obtain at least 75% participation in the survey study from special education teachers. The number of special education teachers and the percentage of respondents was determined by dividing the total number of survey responses by the number of special education teachers within each participating district, provided by each district's superintendent and/or special education director.

Data Analysis

In December, the researcher reviewed all data collected. Analysis of quantitative questions was conducted using SPSS software. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlations, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Qualitative questions were analyzed by identifying recurrent themes by unitizing the open-ended response data then quantifying the responses by frequency to determine the most commonly held viewpoints by the participants. By identifying these commonalities or reoccurring data the researcher was able to determine what, if any, current incentives exist for special educators within Northwest Arkansas, what incentives, if any, do current special educators believe would be the most effective in improving recruitment and retention efforts of special educators, and to determine the most common reasons special education teachers state for why those chose to enter the field of special education. To visualize the alignment of the survey instrument with the research questions in this study refer to the following table (see Table 4).

Table 4

Research Questions, Survey Questions, and Statistical Approach

	Research Questions	Survey Questions	Statistical Approach
1.	To what extent, if any, do perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region differ on the basis of demographic characteristics?	1-9 (demographic) 12 (commitment)	Pearson correlation, One-way ANOVAs
2.	To what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to the perceived level of job commitment among current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region?	10 (job satisfaction) 11 (stress) 12 (commitment) 13 (career longevity)	Pearson correlation
3.	What are the most frequently selected factors that current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region give for wanting to leave the field of special education?	14 (reasons for wanting to leave)	Descriptive statistics
4.	What do current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region indicate their future career plans to be?	15 15 (career plans)	Descriptive statistics
5.	What common reasons do current special education teachers suggest to help reduce the high rate of turnover in the field of special education?	16 (Turnover reduction)	Descriptive statistics
6.	What are the most common, if any, incentives that school districts within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region offer to attract teachers to the field of special education?	17 (Attractive incentives)	Descriptive statistics
7.	What are the most common reasons special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region chose to enter the field of special education?	18 (reasons for entering)	Descriptive statistics

To complete the study, the researcher first conducted descriptive statistics on each of the demographic questions (survey items 1-9). For survey items 1-2 regarding the

participant's total number of years teaching (general and special education) and a total number of years teaching special education, the researcher provided descriptive statistics for continuous variables including the minimum and a maximum number of years entered by participants, the mean, and the standard deviation for each question. For demographic survey items 3-9 regarding participant's current special education teaching setting, current teaching role, credentials, highest level of education, gender, and ethnicity the researcher provided descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages for each question.

For research question one, the researcher conducted Pearson product-moment correlations and one-way ANOVAs to measure each demographic variable (survey items 1-9) compared to the primary dependent variable, the perceived level of job commitment (survey item 12). For research question two (survey items 10, 11, 12, and 13), job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity were compared to the primary dependent variable, job commitment, by using correlation analysis. For research question three (survey item 14), four (survey item 15), five (survey items 16), six (survey item 17), and seven (survey item 18) the researcher provided descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages for each question. For research questions, five through seven the researcher also added qualitative data including direct quotes from participants.

Summary

Chapter three presented the methodology, research design and rationale, information about the participant sample, the survey instrument, and the procedures for how data will be collected and analyzed throughout this study. Chapter four will present the findings and statistical analysis for this study. Quantitative data will be provided in

the form of tables for each research question. Additionally, qualitative data will be included to provide additional insight into research questions 5-7. The last chapter of this study, chapter five, will present the final conclusions for each research question, implications and recommendations for school leaders and educational policymakers, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

In order to examine and identify factors that affect the recruitment and retention of special education teachers within Arkansas, the purposes of this mixed methods study were to: (a) identify the extent, if at all, that perceptions of job commitment among current special teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region differ on the basis of demographic factors; (b) identify the extent, if at all, that perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity are related to the perceived level of job commitment among special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region; (c) identify frequently selected factors that current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region provide for wanting to leave the field of special education; (d) identify what current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region indicate their future career plans to be; (e) identify the most common suggestions that special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region provide to help reduce the current high rate of turnover in the field of special education; (f) identify the most common incentives, if any, that school districts within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region offer to attract/retain teachers to the field of special education; and (g) identify the most common reasons special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region give for choosing to enter the field of special education.

This chapter details the results of the data analyses of the study presented in chapters one, two, and three. Data were obtained through the administration of an 18-item survey instrument administered through the web-based survey tool, SurveyMonkey®. Of the 36 public school districts that were invited to participate in the

survey, 30 (81%) districts accepted the researcher's email request to administer the survey. From those 30 districts, a total of 438 (66%) special education teachers responded "Yes" to the Statement of Consent which allowed them access to the survey. Of those 438 respondents, 401 (92%) completed the online survey instrument. Table 5 displays the name of each participating district, the educational cooperative to which they belong, the superintendent and/or special education director that assisted the researcher as the district contact, and the total number of special teachers employed by each district per the district's contact.

Table 5

Participating Districts, Number of Special Educators, District Contacts, and Educational Cooperatives

District	# of Special Educators	District Contacts	Coop
Alma	22	Cara Witherspoon	GF
Bentonville	111	Jaye Kay Brown	NWA
Booneville	10	Melissa Haney	GF
Cedarville	7	Sarah McPhate	GF
Charleston	5	Jeff Stubblefield	GF
County Line	2	Taylor Gattis & Candy Loyd	GF
Decatur	4	Angie Dennis	NWA
Elkins	5	Felicia Pasley	NWA
Farmington	12	Felicia Pasley	NWA
Fayetteville	66	Carla Curtis	NWA
Fort Smith	150	Katy Hauser	GF
Gentry	9	Angie Dennis	NWA
Greenland	5	Larry Ben & Felicia Pasley	NWA
Greenwood	39	Patti Allison	GF
Hacket/Hartford	6	Tony Quain	GF
Huntsville	15	Clint Jones & Tonja McCone	NWA
Lamar	9	Candy Loyd	GF
Lavaca	5	Steve Rose	GF
Lincoln	10	Mary Ann Spears	NWA
Magazine	4	Brett Bunch	GF
Mansfield	8	Mindy Van Pelt	GF
Mountainburg	8	Dennis Copeland	GF
Mulberry/Pleasant View	4	Lisa Stearman	GF
Paris	8	Wayne Fawcett & Melissa Haney	GF
Pea Ridge	11	Sue Stacey	NWA
Prairie Grove	8	Allen Williams & Felicia Pasley	NWA
Rogers	91	Sherry Stewart	NWA
Scranton	2	Candy Loyd	GF
Siloam Springs	25	Shawna Asencio-Porter	NWA
West Fork	6	Felicia Pasley	NWA
Totals: 30 Districts	667		

Table 6 displays the frequency counts and percentages for survey items 3-9 regarding demographic characteristics. According to survey item three, 54 (38.4%) participants were from elementary campuses (grades PK-5), 119 (29.7%) were from middle-level campuses, and 128 (31.9%) were from secondary school campuses. The majority of special educator participants, 171 (42.6%), reported resource as their current teaching role or where they spent the majority of their teaching day. Meanwhile, 139 (34.7%) participants reported self-contained, 82 (20.4%) selected inclusion, and 9 (2.2%) selected support services as their current teaching role or where they spent the majority of their teaching day according to survey item four.

Table 6 $Frequency\ Counts\ for\ Demographic\ Variables\ (N=401)$

		Frequency	Percentage
Comment and sial advection	Elementary (Grades PK – 5)	154	38.4%
Current special education	Middle Level (Grades 6 – 8)	119	29.7%
teaching setting	Secondary (Grades 9 – 12)	128	31.9%
	Self-contained	139	34.7%
Comment to a shire a radia	Inclusion	82	20.4%
Current teaching role	Resource	171	42.6%
	Support services	9	2.2%
Do you have all the required credentials to be certified for	Yes	347	86.5%
your current position?	No	54	13.5%
Have you ever been placed on an Arkansas ALP for the	Yes	111	27.7%
purposes of teaching special education?	No	290	72.3%
	Bachelor's Degree	39	9.7%
	Bachelor's Degree +	134	33.4%
	additional hours	134	33.4%
Highest level of education	Master's Degree	87	21.7%
	Master's Degree + additional hours	139	34.7%
	Doctorate Degree	2	0.5%
	Male	27	6.7%
Gender	Female	374	93.3%
	African American/Black	2	0.5%
	Native American or Alaska Native	17	4.2%
Ethnicity	Asian American	1	0.2%
	Caucasian	380	94.8%
	Hispanic/Latino	3	0.7%
	Total	401	100.0%

For survey item five, the majority of participants 347 (86.5%) reported having all required credentials to be certified for their current special education position. Therefore,

only 54 (13.5%) of participants lacked the necessary certification to be fully certified for their current special education teaching position. However, according to survey item six, of the 401 special education teachers who participated in this survey, nearly one-third, 111 (27.7%) were either currently serving on an ALP for special education or were placed on an ALP before becoming fully certified for their position.

According to data from survey item seven regarding participants' highest level of educational attainment, over half of all participants held at least a master's degree or higher with 87 (21.7%) respondents currently holding a master's degree, 139 (34.7%) respondents holding a master's with additional hours toward a specialist or doctoral degree, and two (0.5%) of participants reported currently hold a doctorate. Data analysis from survey items eight and nine revealed a large gender and ethnicity gap among special education teachers who participated, with 374 (93.3%) being female and only 27 (6.7%) being male and 380 (94.8%) being Caucasian compared to only 17 (4.2%) being Native American or Alaska Native, three (0.7%) being Hispanic/Latino, two (0.5%) being African American/Black, and one (0.2%) being Asian American.

Table 7 displays descriptive statistics for survey items one and two. According to participant data for survey item one, 44 was the maximum number of years any participant had accrued teaching in both general and special education throughout their career. The mean for all 401 teachers who participated in survey item one equaled 15.42 years teaching in both general and special education. For survey item two, the maximum number of years any participant had accrued teaching specifically in the field of special education equaled 41 with a mean of 13.10 years.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Variables

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total number of years				
teaching (general and special	0	44	15.42	10.524
education)				
Total number of years	0	41	13.10	10.432
teaching special education	U	41	13.10	10.432

The descriptive statistics for survey items 10, 11, 12, and 13 are described in table 8. Regarding the scale variables, they are made as the summation of the Likert scale question to every sub-question. Moreover, all the scales are recoded so that the higher scores refer to a higher level of the tackled measures, i.e., higher score means higher job satisfaction, higher stress, higher commitment and finally higher career longevity. The average value of job satisfaction is an intermediate level with more than half of the sample satisfied overall about their job (M = 33.32, SD = 5.719), this also applies for commitment level (M = 16.79, SD = 4.080) and Career longevity (M = 3.42, SD = 1.228). On the other hand, stress levels are rather high with (M = 15.20, SD = 3.089).

Table 8
Scale Measures for Selected Variables

Measures	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job Satisfaction	13.00	45.00	33.32	5.71908
Stress	4.00	20.00	15.20	3.08895
Commitment	5.00	25.00	16.79	4.07977
Career longevity	1.00	5.00	3.42	1.22826

Research Question One

Research question one asked, "To what extent, if any, do perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River

Valley region differ on the basis of demographic characteristics?" First, relationships with job commitment need to be inspected for each demographic characteristic.

Demographic characteristics vary in nature, some of which are ordinal, those were treated as scale and acquired a Pearson correlation that gives an insight into the relationship, whereas others are nominal variables that need to be converted to several indicator variables to assess the correlation of each with job commitment. On the other hand, scale and bivariate variables were assessed directly.

In the table of correlations (Table 9), 18 independent variables were correlated with the dependent variable, job commitment. According to Field (2013), when using Pearson's correlation coefficient, r is used as a measure to quantify the strength of a relationship between two variables. As a general guideline, Rowen (as cited in Field, 2013) suggests a value of r = .10 as a small effect between two variables, which the effect explains about 1% of the total variance. For a medium effect, Field suggests r = .30, which affects about 9% of the total variance. Lastly, for a large effect between two variables, Field suggests r = .50 which affects about 25% of the variance.

Table 9

Correlations for Selected Variables with the Job Commitment Scale

	Job
	Commitment
Total number of years teaching	.020
Total number of years teaching special education	.048
Required credentials to be certified.	039
Currently teaching special education under an Arkansas ALP waiver	.067
Highest level of education	.044
Gender	062
Teaching setting ^a	.069
Teaching setting ^b	003
Teaching setting ^c	096
Teaching Role ^a	.104*
Teaching Role b	105 [*]
Teaching Role ^c	030
Teaching Role ^d	.053
Ethnicity ^a	022
Ethnicity ^b	.047
Ethnicity ^c	047
Ethnicity ^d	026
Ethnicity ^e	052

Note. * p < .05; ** p < .01. Setting: a = Elementary, b = Middle Level, c = Secondary; Role: a = Self-contained, b = Inclusion, c = Resource, d = Support services; Ethnicity: a = African American/Black, b = Native American or Alaska Native, c = Asian American, d = Caucasian, e = Hispanic/Latino.

For this research question, none of the 18 independent variables exhibited a significant correlation to job commitment. However, like Green (2011), the researcher highlighted those correlations that were at least statistically significant at p < .05. According to the table of correlations (Table 9), job commitment had a positive correlation for those special education teachers serving in the roles of self-contained, r(399) = .10, p < .05. Adversely, inclusion teachers r(399) = -.11, p < .05 had a negative correlation with job commitment. Further analysis of any relationships that may exist

between teaching setting, teaching role, educational attainment, race/ethnicity, and job commitment were tackled through a detailed analysis of variance ANOVA (Table 10).

Table 10 displays the results for four one-way ANOVA tests conducted with the respondents' job commitment scale score. Only teaching role provided significant results for job commitment. Specifically, no job commitment scale differences were found for teaching setting (p = .444), highest educational level attained (p = .439), and race of respondent (p = .173). Teaching role, however, had significantly different job commitment scale scores (p = .008). Specifically, the Support services (M = 11.11) had lower levels of commitment than the other job roles.

Table 10

ANOVA Tests of Categorical Variables with the Job Commitment Scale

Source	df	SS	MS	F	l
Teaching setting	2	10.64	5.32	0.814	
Teaching role	3	76.62	25.54	3.998	
Education	4	36.00	9.00	1.383	•
Race/Ethnicity	5	50.32	10.06	1.551	•

Note. Ratings based on 5-point metric: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

Research Question Two

Research question two asked, "To what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to the perceived level of job commitment among current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region?" To answer this question, Pearson correlations were once again used to measure the relationship between three independent variables (job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity) and the dependent variable (job commitment); keeping in mind that Pearson correlations only give strength and direction of the relation with no indication of

dependency.

All correlations were significant at p < .001. Specifically, job satisfaction was positively correlated with job commitment r(399) = .56, p < .001 and career longevity r(399) = .58, p < .001 but negatively correlated with job stress r(399) = -.52, p = .001. Moreover, job satisfaction and career longevity were positively correlated r(399) = .41, p < .001. In addition, job stress was negatively correlated with both with job satisfaction r(399) = -.53, p < .001 and career longevity r(399) = -.42, p < .001 (Table 11).

Table 11

Correlations among Selected Variables (N = 401)

Variables		1	2	3	4
	r	1			
1. Commitment ^a	p				
	N	401			
	r	.559	1		
2. Job Satisfaction ^b	p	.000			
	N	401	401		
	r	521	529	1	
3. Stress ^a	p	.000	.000		
	N	401	401	401	
	r	.582	.413	420	1
4. Career longevity ^c	p	.000	.000	.000	
	N	401	401	401	401

Note. All correlations were significant at p < .001. $^a 1 = Strongly$ disagree to 5 = Strongly agree; $^b 1 = Very$ dissatisfied to 5 = Very satisfied; $^c 1 = Definitely$ plan to leave special education as soon as I can to 5 = Stay as long as I'm able to even if that's after retirement age

Research Question Three

Research question three asked, "What frequently selected factors do current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region give for wanting to leave the field of special education?" This question had a multiple response

set and included an open-ended answer that was recoded into fitting categories. Table 12 displays the frequency counts participants selected for wanting to leave the field of special education from the highest frequency counts to the lowest frequency counts. The frequency counts were based on the number of respondents that selected each item. In this table, the frequencies and percentages total more than 100% because respondents could select multiple items.

Table 12

Frequency Counts for Reasons Wanting to Leave Sorted by Highest Frequency

	Frequency	Percentage %
14k. Paperwork issues	255	63.6%
14q. Workload issues	225	56.1%
14e. Lack of administrative support	145	36.2%
14p. Salary issues	133	33.2%
14h. Lack of respect or prestige	117	29.2%
14o. Student discipline issues	116	28.9%
14m. Retirement	103	25.7%
14a. Class size issues	101	25.2%
14g. Lack of time to interact with colleagues	98	24.4%
14d. Inadequate resources (e.g., lack of necessary supplies,	97	24.2%
textbooks, etc.)		
14f. Lack of parental involvement support	89	22.2%
14c. Family reasons (e.g., homemaking, child rearing,	75	18.7%
spouse, or partner relocating for new job)	70	10.00/
14i. Negative school climate	72	18.0%
14l. Pursue nonteaching employment opportunities in the	55	13.7%
field of education	27	<i>(</i> .70/
14r. Other	27	6.7%
14b. Community issues (e.g., teaching in an undesirable or	26	6.5%
violent community)		
14j. Negative teacher-student relationships	22	
14n. Return to graduate school	21	5.2%

Of the 401 respondents that participated in survey item 14, the largest percentage (n = 255, 63.6%) reported paperwork issues as the reason they wanted to leave the special

education teaching profession. Paperwork issues were directly followed by workload issues at 56.1% (n = 225). However, it is important to note that workload issues for special education teachers can be caused by numerous reasons, including paperwork.

Other frequently selected reasons respondents gave for wanting to leave the field of special education included lack of administrative support (n = 145, 36.2%), salary issues (n = 133, 33.2%), lack of prestige (n = 117, 29.2%), student discipline issues (n = 116, 28.9%), class size issues (n = 101, 25.2%), lack of time to interact with colleagues (n = 98, 24.4%), inadequate supplies (n = 97, 24.2%), and lack of parental involvement support (n = 89, 22.2%). In addition, in accordance with the tendency of the high portion of respondents that have been teaching for a long period, there are 25.7% (n = 103) that want to leave in order to retire.

Research Question Four

Research question four asked, "What do current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region indicate their future career plans to be?" This research question also employed multiple responses as well as an open-ended answer (other) that were recoded into fitting categories. Table 13 displays the frequency counts respondents selected for what they hope to be doing over the next three to five years of their career in order from the highest frequency to the lowest frequency. The frequency counts were based on the number of respondents that selected each item. In this table, the frequencies and percentages total more than 100% due to the fact that respondents could select multiple items.

Table 13

Frequency Counts for Future Career Plans Sorted by Highest Frequency. (n = 401)

	Frequency	Percentage %
15e. Remain in my current special education position more	152	37.9%
than 3 to 5 years	132	31.9%
15f. Retire	102	25.4%
15h. Seek employment outside of education	68	17.0%
15k. Teach general education in the same school or district	63	15.7%
15g. Seek employment in a nonteaching job in education	57	14.2%
15a. Obtain a promotion within the school or district	47	11.7%
15l. Teach special education in another school district	43	10.7%
15i. Stay at home (e.g., child rearing, providing elder care,	39	9.7%
homemaking)	39	9.1%
15j. Teach general education in another school district	38	9.5%
15m. Other	21	5.2%
15c. Pursue a graduate degree full time, in special education	16	4.0%
15d. Pursue a graduate degree full time, not in special	14	3.5%
education	14	3.3%
15b. Pursue a graduate degree full time, in a non-education	4	0.20/
field	1	0.2%

According to survey item 15, nearly half of all respondents are at least considering continuing to teach in the field of special education over the next three to five years. The highest bulk of those respondents (n = 152, 37.9%), do not intend to leave their current job. While an additional 10.7% (n = 43) of respondents intend to continue to teach in the field of special education, but in another school district.

Other frequently selected responses special education teachers selected regarding their future career plans over the next three to five years include retirement (n = 102, 25.4%), seek employment outside of education (n = 68, 17%), teach general education in the same school or district (n = 63, 15.7%), seek employment in a nonteaching job in education (n = 57, 14.2%), obtain a promotion within the school or district (n = 47,

11.7%), stay at home (n = 39, 9.7%), and teach general education in another school district (n = 38, 9.5%).

Research Question Five

Research question five asked, "What common reasons do current special education teachers suggest to help reduce the high rate of turnover in the field of special education? Survey item 16 was written as an open-ended question to allow special education teachers to expand on their thoughts and/or suggestions for improving the high rate of teacher turnover and improving retention efforts in the field of special education. However, answers were also recoded into fitting categories for quantitative purposes to show frequency counts and percentages. Additionally, the researcher will also include qualitative data in the form of written quotes from respondents for further detail.

Table 14 displays the frequency counts and percentages of the 15 major categories respondents suggested for reducing the high rate of special education teacher turnover and improving retention in order of highest frequency to lowest frequency. The frequency counts were based on the number of respondents that mentioned each item within their response. For Table 14, frequencies and percentages total more than 100%. This is due to the fact that respondents were able to elaborate on their answers and to give multiple suggestions within their response.

Table 14

Frequency Counts: Themes for Suggestions for Improving Special Education Teacher Retention and Reducing the High Rate of Turnover (n = 401)

	Frequency	Percentage %
Financial Incentives Including Increased Salary, Loan Reimburgement, and/or Additional Stipends	95	23.6%
Reimbursement, and/or Additional Stipends Increased Support	84	20.9%
Decrease Paperwork	51	12.7%
Additional Time to Complete Paperwork	47	11.7%
Smaller Class Sizes	41	10.2%
Additional Planning Period	37	9.2%
None or N/A	33	8.2%
Hire Additional Professionals to Complete Paperwork	31	7.7%
Increased Respect	27	6.7%
Increased Resources	21	5.2%
Reduce Workload	19	4.7%
Increased Training	16	4.0%
Increased Communication	7	1.7%
Increased Opportunities for Promotion	4	1.0%
Increased Student Care	3	0.7%

The most frequently suggested item for reducing the high rate of special education teacher turnover and improving retention was additional financial incentives (n = 95, 23.6%) including an increased salary, loan reimbursement, and/or additional stipends. One respondent stated, "Give a raise for additional job duties or a stipend." Another respondent stated, "Pay throughout the summer to organize and review paperwork." Another special education teacher wrote, "Maybe a pay incentive would be nice. We all go home and spend an extra 3-4 hours at minimum every night doing paperwork that there is not the time to do during the teaching day."

Additional financial incentives were followed closely by increased support as suggested by 20.9% (n = 84) of all respondents. For instance, one respondent stated, "Be

supportive of our role and its challenge." Another special educator wrote, "Teacher support is nonexistent. Supervisors are never in the schools or in the classrooms. They never show up unless something HUGE has happened and they have to." Another respondent stated,

Listen to the teacher's needs and concerns. Make every attempt to help meet those needs within reason. Do not dismiss them or tell them their opinion is invalid. Trust their judgment when it comes to student placement. Allow them to take a different position if one becomes available to them. Have administration and supervisors spend a full day in their classrooms, not just 10 minutes, to get a full understanding of what it is like day-to-day. Give adequate para support and do not steal para's to do something else. Listen to them openly and objectively, most of us do not say anything out of fear.

Changes to special education paperwork or how the paperwork is completed were also mentioned by several respondents as a means to reduce the high rate of special education teacher turnover and increase retention. Special educators' suggested reducing the overall amount of paperwork (n = 51, 12.7%), being allowed additional time to complete paperwork (n = 47, 11.7%), and for schools to hire additional professionals to complete the paperwork (n = 31, 7.7%). Of those respondents, one stated, "Provide extra time to do required paperwork during the school day so that it doesn't interfere with my delivery of a quality education to my students." Another special education teacher stated,

The amount of paperwork placed upon teachers is immense. This can be especially overwhelming and stressful during the part of the year that all annual review/IEP's are to be renewed. The most important way to help in this area is to

give special education teachers more time during the school day to work on files/conferences. Some non-special education teachers get a "teaming period" in addition to their conference period to work together and plan for the future of their class. Most sped teachers I know are doing paperwork during this time and putting their class needs on the back burner.

Lastly, another respondent suggested,

Our district needs to hire case managers to do the due process paperwork. I got into this to be a teacher and not a case manager. Lesson planning suffers as a result of spending so much time on due process paperwork. Student learning for sped students should be the first priority instead of the paperwork.

Other frequently suggested topics special education teachers gave to help reduce the amount of turnover and increase retention included smaller class sizes (n = 41, 10.2%), an additional planning period (n = 37, 9.2%), increased respect for the position (n = 27, 6.7%), increasing the amount of resources available (n = 21, 5.2%), reducing their workload (n = 19, 4.7%), and increased training (n = 16, 4.0%).

Research Question Six

Research question six asked, "What are the most common incentives that school districts within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region offer to attract teachers to the field of special education?" Even though survey item 17 was written as an openended question to allow respondents to expand upon their answers, the data was recoded into nine major fitting categories for quantitative purposes to show frequency counts and percentages. Additionally, the researcher will also include qualitative data in the form of written quotes from respondents for further detail.

Table 15 details the frequency and percentage counts of respondents in the order of the highest frequency to the lowest frequency. The frequency counts were based on the number of respondents that mentioned each item within their response. Frequency counts and percentages are shown in Table 15 will be more than 100% because respondents were allowed to mention multiple incentives their district may offer to attract special education teachers.

Table 15

Frequency Counts: Incentives Districts Currently Offer to Attract Special Education Teachers by Highest Frequency. (n = 401)

	Frequency	Percentage %
No Additional Incentives	347	87.9%
Additional Contract Days	24	6.1%
Additional Stipends	18	4.6%
Tuition Reimbursement	12	3.0%
Additional Planning Periods	10	2.5%
Bonus	2	0.5%
Paraprofessional Assistance	2	0.5%
Additional Paperwork Days	2	0.5%
Specialized Training	1	0.3%

The overwhelming majority of respondents within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region (n = 347, 87.9%) reported that their district did not currently provide any additional incentives to entice special education teachers to enter or remain in the field of special education. While many respondents simply answered survey item 17 by simply stating "No," other respondents chose to expand on their answers to provide additional information. One such respondent stated, "there are no incentives offered at my school, which would be a reason why I would consider leaving for another district. Another

respondent who worked in a district that did not offer incentives to their special education teachers stated,

No, in fact after being a special educator for over 30 years, I do not even get a raise. The only incentive I have to stay is intrinsic. Special educators should be paid more or paperwork removed from their job responsibilities. We are educators, not secretaries.

Another respondent wrote,

No, in fact, even though all the core subject teachers have two planning periods (one for the team, and one for the subject), we as special educators (also teaching core subjects) only have one — which is usually used for meetings and paperwork.

And, some sped teachers don't get any planning time. I am lucky to have one!

But, it is not coordinated with our team or subject area. So, this only adds to our feeling of being undervalued. In addition, people who take on after school or lunch activities are often praised for "all the extra time and effort they spend on students" — yet all time we spend after school, at lunch, before school, or during our planning period working with students, parents, and other teachers to help our kids is not acknowledged at all. How is that NOT spending time/effort on kids?

Another special educator wrote,

No, they do not. There is a need to provide special education teachers with more incentives to stay with special education. The burnout on paperwork and the lack of support from the administration is the main reasons that most special education teachers are leaving their positions.

Lastly, another respondent stated,

No, we do not get any incentives. I believe that would keep the turnover down. We also have additional training that does not get compensated. I get a planning period, but not extra ones like the general education teachers do while their kids are at recess.

Of the small percentage of respondents who reported their district does offer additional incentives to attract and retain special educators, additional contract days (n = 24, 6.1%) were the most prevalent. Other additional incentives mentioned by respondents included additional stipends (n = 18, 4.6%), tuition reimbursement (n = 12, 3.0%), additional planning periods (n = 10, 2.5%), and bonuses (n = 2, 0.5%).

Research Question Seven

Research question seven asked, "What are the most common reasons special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region chose to enter the field of special education? Again, this was an open-ended question to allow respondents to expand on their reasoning for choosing to enter into the field of special education. However, the data was recoded into seven major fitting categories for quantitative purposes to show frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative data, in the form of quotes, will also be explored.

Table 16 presents the frequency counts for the nine general categories respondent's stated as the reasons they chose to enter into the field of special education. The frequency counts were based on the number of respondents that mentioned each item within their written response. Frequency counts in Table 16 are listed in the order of highest frequency to lowest frequency.

Table 16

Frequency Counts for Reasons Special Education Teachers Chose to Enter the Field by Highest Frequency

	Frequency	Percentage %
Heart for Special Education Students	189	47.4%
Desire to Learn How to Help Special Education Students / Family Member	79	19.8%
Love for Teaching	48	12.0%
Could Not Find Job as a General Education Teacher	39	9.8%
Offered Position	35	8.8%
Location	8	2.0%
Additional Incentives	1	0.3%

The largest percentage of respondents (n = 189, 47.4%) mentioned their love of or having a heart for special education students as the reason they chose to enter the profession. For example, one respondent stated, "I have a heart to help students who have learning disabilities and need a little extra time and attention to learn the concepts." Another respondent wrote, "I love kids with special needs." Several other respondents wrote similar positive statements such as "heart for special education students and providing a quality education to those students that need it the most" and "special education students hold a special place in my heart."

Additionally, 79 respondents (19.8%) discussed having a desire to learn more about and how to assist special education students after being exposed to them in a general education classroom or through family and friends. One respondent stated,

The main reason was to work with students who faced physical, mental, behavioral, and academic challenges. My favorite group of students is the multi-disabled, non-verbal, behavior-challenged, who need someone to treat them like

all other students and care about them. Yet, also make them accountable and responsible; teach them skills that they can use to be a viable part of society. I like challenges, and I've certainly found that with the students I teach. I've also come to enjoy co-teaching and the resource setting in the secondary level.

Another teacher wrote,

I was given the opportunity to be a teacher assistant one period a day my junior and senior year of high school. My first mentor teacher (2nd grade) had me work with the "low" reading group. I loved it! My mentor my senior year was the high school self-contained teacher. I knew this was my calling after that! I do this job for the kids – period!

Other frequently mentioned reasons for wanting to join the field of special education included a love for teaching (n = 48, 12%), could not find a job as a general education teacher (n = 39, 9.8%), offered the position (n = 35, 8.8%), and location (n = 8, 2.0%).

It is also important to note that, even though many respondents stated they felt drawn to the field of special education originally, they had become disgruntled with the position over time. For example, one respondent stated, "I chose to enter the profession because of the students. However, the daily routine, workload, and stress with no pay have caused me to hate the position." Another special educator stated,

I began teaching SPED out of a passion for students with severe and profound disabilities. I have found that my passion is not as valued by the district as filling spots and emphasizing graduate degrees. I do not feel like my school administration is knowledgeable enough about special education to support me

well or provide adequate accommodations for my classroom, workload, or struggles.

Another respondent wrote,

I love working with students with disabilities and envisioned myself going into a self-contained type classroom. I've ended up teaching primarily resource and inclusion classes, and while I love the vast majority of my kids, an ever increasing amount of students with emotional/behavioral problems combined with an ever growing caseload is putting too much strain on me.

Lastly, another respondent stated,

I felt it was my calling - to advocate and teach the students who needed the most help felt important to me. I wholeheartedly regret the decision to be a special ed. Teacher. I have loved my students and felt very competent at my job – often felt I excelled in my duties – but it has taken a toll on my mental and physical health to be under such stress so many months of the year. I talked with colleagues in special education frequently about how much we regret our choice and how trapped we feel because the shortage prevents transfers out and financially we must work. The shortage overburdens those of us choosing to stay until we can retire. I do still feel this is a noble calling but also feel overworked, underappreciated, and minimally compensated for what is expected of the profession. In a way, it is heartbreaking to know it's so very important to do this job right yet feel so negatively towards it. I really hope things change...it is a sad position to work in right now.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings and statistical analysis of this study. Results for each of the seven research questions were based on the responses of 401 special education teachers representing 30 public school districts throughout Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas River Valley region. The following chapter will provide the final conclusions for each research question, a discussion of the implications and recommendations for school leaders and educational policymakers, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The United States is experiencing an increased demand for special education teachers. Currently, 49 states are reporting shortages of special education teachers with special educators leaving the profession at nearly double the rate (12.3%) of general education teachers ("NCPSSERS Fact Sheet," 2014). The shortages have led to policymakers, both at the federal and state levels, along with individual school districts and building level leaders to research, develop, and employ creative new strategies to recruit new special educators to the field and retain those special educators who are currently working in the classroom.

As one of the 49 states currently facing a shortage of special education teachers, Arkansas is also in dire need of identifying and developing research-based strategies to attract new applicants to the field of special education while also finding a way to keep current special educators from leaving the profession. Even though alternative license plans offer many school districts in Arkansas an opportunity to address the shortage temporarily, more work still needs to be done to help struggling districts fill vacant positions and support novice and experienced special educators once employed.

Considering the shortage facing the country and Arkansas specifically, this study sought to examine ways through which the state could attract, hire, and retain special education teachers for future generations. Pertinent to the problem, the study, which was conducted in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region, sought to identify many of the challenges special education teachers currently face on a daily basis, as well as the current recruitment strategies used by both state and federal governments and local school districts.

Therefore, the purpose of this mixed methods study was to analyze factors that may affect the recruitment and retention efforts of special education teachers within the area of the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region through: (a) identifying the extent, if at all, that perceptions of job commitment among current special teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region differ on the basis of demographic factors; (b) identifying the extent, if at all, that perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity are related to the perceived level of job commitment among special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region; (c) identifying the most prevalent reasons that current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region provide for wanting to leave the field of special education; (d) identifying what current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region indicate their future career plans to be; (e) identify the most common suggestions that special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region provide to help reduce the current high rate of turnover in the field of special education; (f) identifying the most common incentives, if any, that school districts within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region offer to attract/retain teachers to the field of special education; and (g) identifying the most common reasons special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region give for choosing to enter the field of special education.

In this chapter, the researcher presents conclusions for each research question, implications and recommendations for school leaders and educational policymakers, and recommendations for future research. First, conclusions for each of the seven research questions will be presented based on the findings from the data analysis from chapter

four. The researcher will also attempt to support those findings with previous literature presented in chapter two. Next, implications for school administrators and educational policy makers in the area of special education teacher recruitment and retention will be discussed based on the conclusions of each research question. Finally, the researcher will offer several recommendations for further research to add to the field of study.

Conclusions

From the research presented in this study, one can conclude that there is an urgent need for school leaders and policymakers within Arkansas to address the current special education teacher shortage. Recruitment, support, and retaining of special education teachers are critical in ensuring a free appropriate public education for all eligible students with disabilities. This study aimed at to identify the most prevalent challenges special educators face on a day-to-day basis, leading to the current special education teacher shortage, and at encouraging Arkansas school districts and policymakers to implement positive systematic changes to improve recruitment and retention efforts.

Research question one. The first question addressed the extent to which perceptions towards job commitment among special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region differed based on demographic characteristics. As the results show, perceptions of job commitment among special educators do not significantly differ based on demographic characteristics. However, the results did suggest that the special educators' teaching role does play a factor in their level of job commitment. According to the survey data, teachers within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region serving in self-contained teaching roles were more committed. This is inconsistent with Green's (2011) study, which found that special

educators serving students with moderate/severe disabilities, which are typically taught in self-contained classrooms, had little or no significant correlation with job commitment.

This study also indicated that inclusion teachers within the Northwest

Arkansas/River Valley region had lower levels of job commitment compared to other
special education teaching roles. This finding is similar to many other researchers who
found that special education teachers' levels of job commitment are waning due to
increased academic accountability and an increased workload which often lead to higher
levels of stress and burnout (e.g., Billingsley, 2004b; Brunsting et al., 2014; Fore et al.,
2002; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Leko et al., 2015; McCoy, 2007; Nichols et al.,
2008). Inclusion teachers may also suffer more from role ambiguity or role conflict,
leading to burnout, compared to other special educators since they often float from
classroom to classroom and subject to subject throughout the day (e.g., Billingsley,
2004b; Brunsting et al., 2014; Plash & Piotrowski, 2006).

Research question two. The second question entailed an investigation of the perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity as related to the levels of job commitment among the special education teachers within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region. Based on the results of this study, special educators in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region who are satisfied with their jobs are also more committed and plan to remain in the profession for longer periods of time.

Adversely, stress was negatively correlated with each indicator and therefore plays a negative role in the levels of job commitment, satisfaction, and career longevity of special education teachers. Essentially, it can be construed that the occurrence of high levels of stress for special education teachers increases the likelihood of dissatisfaction or

lowers the degree of satisfaction, which, in turn, affects the levels of commitment and career longevity. These conclusions are similar to those drawn by Green (2011) and numerous other researchers (e.g., Ansley et al., 2016; Berry et al., 2011; Brunsting et al., 2014; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Fore et al., 2002; Gersten et al., 2001; Plash & Piotrowski, 2006).

Research question three. Research question three asked, "What are the most frequently selected factors that current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region give for wanting to leave the field of special education?" Based on the 401 respondents' frequency counts for survey item 14, the two most frequently selected item that special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region selected for wanting to leave the field of special education were paperwork issues and workload issues. These findings are similar to those found by many other researchers (e.g., Billingsley, 2004b; Goldstein, 2003; LTF, 2016; Nance & Calabrese, 2009; Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

Lack of administrative support was also identified as a primary reason for special educators wanting to the leave their profession. These findings are similar to Carlson et al. (2002), Cross and Billingsley (1994), and Leko and Smith (2010), who concluded administrative support and school climate could be the two most important factors related to special education retention rates. Other researchers with similar findings include Billingsley et al. (2004), Correa and Wagner (2011), and Gersten et al. (2001).

This study also indicated salary issues as a prevalent reason for special educators wanting to leave the field. Henke et al. (1997) and Billingsley (2004b) had similar findings, concluding that special educators often leave to work in other districts or

occupations to obtain higher salaries and better benefits. Other frequently selected reasons from this study for wanting to leave the field of special included lack of respect or prestige, student discipline issues, retirement, and class size issues.

Research question four. The fourth research question focused on the participants' future career plans. Research question four asked, "What do current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region indicate their future career plans to be?" Based on the results of this study, only 48.6% of respondents indicated their intent to stay in the field within the next three to five years. These results are similar to a study conducted by Westling and Whitten (1996), who surveyed 158 special education teachers to determine their intent to remain in or leave the profession. According to their study, only 57% of special educators indicated their intent was to stay.

Of the 48.6% respondents who indicated their intent was to stay, 37.9% of respondents indicated that they are planning to remain in their current special education teaching position. Another 10.7% of respondents indicated their future career plans were to teach special education, but in another school district. However, an additional 4% of respondents reported their future career plans to include leaving the special education classroom in order to pursue a graduate degree full time, in special education. Therefore, those respondents may well return to the area of special education once they have obtained their degrees.

According to this study, the most frequently selected reason for wanting to leave their current special education teaching position within the next three to five years was retirement. The second most frequently selected reason was to teach general education, with 63 respondents selecting to teach general education in the same school or district

and another 38 respondents selecting to teach general education in another school or district. Other frequently selected reasons respondents provided were to seek employment outside of education, to seek employment in a nonteaching job in education, to obtain a promotion within their current school or district, and to stay at home.

This study indicates special education teacher attrition continues to be a critical issue. The results of this study are similar to the conclusions drawn from Plash and Piotrowki (2006), who concluded around 13.2% of special educators annually leave their positions to obtain employment in other areas or take a job teaching general education. Other researchers also found a high rate of attrition among special education teachers (e.g., Billingsley, 2004a; Billingsley, 2004b; Leko & Smith, 2010; Sobel & Taylor, 2015; Thornton et al., 2007).

Research question five. Research question five asked, "What common reasons do current special education teachers in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region suggest to help reduce the high rate of turnover in the field of special education?" Based on the results of this study, the most frequently suggested theme for improving retention rates and reducing the high rate of turnover was offering additional financial incentives to special educators. Similar studies also suggest the addition of financial incentives is needed to attract and retain special education teachers (e.g., Billingsley, 2004b; Brownell et al., 2004; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Henke et al., 1997; Nichols et al., 2008).

The second most frequently selected item for improving retention and reducing turnover was increased support. As detailed in this study, increased support for special educators can be achieved in a variety of ways. For instance, many researchers suggest creating induction programs for novice teachers (e.g., Billingsley, 2004b; Billingsley et

al., 2004; Brownell et al., 2004; Leko & Smith, 2010; Whitaker, 2000). Other studies suggest increased administrative support as a way to reduce the shortage (e.g., Billingsley et al., 2004; Carlson et al., 2002; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Leko & Smith, 2010).

Paperwork assistance was also a frequently suggested theme among special educators to increase retention rates. Suggestions include decreasing the overall amount of paperwork, providing additional time to complete paperwork, and hiring additional professionals to assist in paperwork completion. Similarly, several other studies have examined paperwork and its effect on the retention rates of special educators (e.g., Billingsley, 2004b; Fore et al., 2002; Goldstein, 2003; LTF, 2016; Nance & Calabrese, 2009).

Research question six. The sixth question focused on the incentives offered by school districts in the region to attract teachers to the field of special education. Research question six asked, "What are the most common, if any, incentives that school districts within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region offer to attract teachers to the field of special education?" Based on the results of this study, the majority of schools within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region do not offer any additional incentives to attract or retain special education teachers to their district.

However, a small minority of respondents did indicate that there are schools within the region that do offer benefits to attract and retain special educators. Of the incentives reported by respondents, the most prevalent incentive was additional contract days. Other incentives included additional stipends, tuition reimbursement, additional planning periods, bonuses, paraprofessional assistance, and additional paperwork days.

A similar study was recently released by the ADE. According to the study (LTF, 2016), 234 public school districts and 22 open enrollment charter schools within Arkansas were surveyed about incentives offered to special educators. Of the 143 districts that responded, 84% reported that they did not offer additional incentives for special education teachers.

Research question seven. The seventh question focused on the reasons special education teachers in Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region chose to enter the field of special education. Based on the results of this study, the majority of special education teachers within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region indicated that their love for special education students was the major motivating factor behind their choice to enter the profession. Other notable factors respondents stated were their desire to learn how to help special students, love for teaching, or lack of opportunities in general education. Essentially, the responses revealed that intrinsic motivation factors played a crucial role in their overall desire to become a special education teacher. Similarly, Herzberg also alleges that intrinsic motivation leads to increased job satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 1998).

Implications and Recommendations for School Leaders and Policymakers

A crisis in special education currently exists. The statistics are staggering, with special educators leaving the profession at nearly double the rate of general education teachers and 49 states reporting special education teacher shortages ("NCPSSERS Fact Sheet," 2014). To think about the shortage is disheartening. Those students who need help the most cannot find educators willing to teach them. Understanding the factors that impact the decisions of special educators to enter, remain in, or leave the field of special

education is vital for school leaders to find, hire, and retain teachers within their districts in this critical shortage area. Therefore, it is crucial that school leaders and educational policymakers work together to find new ways to attract and retain special education teachers.

School leaders. This section will provide implications and recommendations for school leaders based on the conclusions drawn from this study.

Financial incentives. According to the findings from this study, the majority of schools in the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region offer few, if any, incentives to help attract or retain special education teachers. This study revealed that the addition of financial incentives for special education teachers could improve their job satisfaction and commitment, which, in turn, could reduce the high turnover rate. According to the data presented in chapter four, 133 respondents reported salary issues as one of the reasons they want to leave the field of special education. Similarly, the most prevalent suggestion given by respondents of this survey for improving special education teacher retention and reducing the high rate of turnover was the addition of financial incentives such as salary increases, stipends, or loan reimbursement.

Therefore, if school leaders truly want to find qualified special education teachers to ensure a quality education for their special education population, they may consider offering additional financial incentives to attract the most qualified candidates and keep their most talented special education teachers from leaving the workforce. Essentially, the provision of additional incentives could be challenging for individual school districts because of tight budget constraints. However, due to the supply and demand of special education teachers in today's market, it may be essential for district leaders to review

current budgets and attempt to find ways to incentivize special educators to join or remain teaching within their districts, especially if other districts do offer such incentives.

Respondents to this study also indicated that special educators suffer from a lack of respect or prestige and have a desire for increased respect. Therefore, the desire for improved financial incentives could also be interpreted as a desire for general recognition. Even though Herzberg named salary as a hygiene factor, as opposed to a motivator, he did suggest that some participants within his study did correlate an increase in salary with achievement. In these cases, the salary was found to be a form of recognition for a job well done (Chapman, n.d.).

Administrative support. Administrative support was also observed as a crucial area of concern among special education teachers. According to data from chapter four, lack of administrative support was a major reason respondents gave for wanting to leave the field of special education. Additionally, increased support was the second highest suggestion from respondents for improving special education teacher retention and reducing the high rate of turnover. Therefore, school administrators should consider increasing the amount of support they offer their special education teachers, especially their novice teachers. Due to the nature of the job, special education teachers already feel as if they are under a microscope, dealing with a multitude of academic needs, student behavior problems, disorders, and workload issues.

School leaders may also seek out additional professional development to improve their knowledge base on special education laws, regulations, and other relevant issues.

By expanding their knowledge base regarding special education, administrators can obtain a better understanding of the issues currently being addressed by special education

teachers within their districts. They may also be more willing to communicate and listen to their special educators when issues arise throughout the year.

Inadequate resources or the lack of necessary supplies for special education teachers and students was another frequently reported reason for wanting to leave the field of special education. For example, one respondent stated, "Give us the resources we need to be effective teachers." Another respondent wrote, "More resources for sped kids…" Lastly, another special education teacher wrote, "Provide adequate funding for appropriate resources to teach hands-on and meaningful lessons that benefit the students."

Administrators should be cognizant of the challenges special educators face and be willing to support when needed. According to the data provided in this study, other ways school leaders could provide administrative support include the following:

- Observing and providing feedback to the special education teachers regularly
- Allowing special education teachers to have a common plan to collaborate
- Allocating time regularly to express appreciation to special education teachers
- Offering high quality and relevant professional development in the area of special education to both special and general educators
- Supporting the interactions between the special education teachers, general education teachers, students, and parents
- Providing emotional support to the teachers through open communication.

Paperwork and workload issues. According to the findings from this study, paperwork and workload issues were the two most prominent reasons special educators selected as reasons they want to leave the field of special education. Along those same lines, when asked for suggestions to improve special education teacher retention and

reduce the high rate of turnover, 129 respondents suggested decreasing the amount of paperwork, having additional time to complete paperwork, or hiring additional staff to complete paperwork. Additionally, 41 respondents suggested smaller class sizes and another 19 respondents suggested a reduced workload.

Paperwork and workload issues could also lead to higher levels of stress and burnout for special education teachers. This is significant because stress, as mentioned in research question two, is negatively correlated to job commitment, satisfaction, and career longevity. Therefore, as special educators' levels of stress go up, their likelihood of staying committed and satisfied with their job goes down. Likewise, their willingness to remain in the profession also goes down.

Paperwork and workload issues may also be affecting the quality of instruction that special education students receive on a daily basis. As special educators continually fall behind on these issues, they have to make a choice of giving up more of their own personal time after school or using some of their instructional time during the school day to catch back up. For instance, one respondent stated "The amount of paperwork is overwhelming. More time is spent making sure all paperwork is done correctly and on time than actually creating worthwhile lessons to TEACH." Another special education teacher wrote, "Provide extra time to do required paperwork during the school day so that it doesn't interfere with my delivery of a quality education to my students." Lastly, another respondent stated, "Reduce SPED paperwork or have someone that takes care of tracking students' failing grades, annual review/IEP paperwork, and scheduling meetings. That way I can teach instead of doing paperwork."

Therefore, to assist special educators regarding paperwork and to help alleviate some of their additional workloads, school leaders may consider the following suggestions given by respondents to this study:

- Reduce class sizes and caseloads for special education teachers
- Additional planning periods for special education teachers to complete paperwork, schedule meetings, check on students, etc.
- Determining caseloads based on severity of needs rather than number of students
- Hire additional staff to reduce caseloads or complete the required paperwork for special education teachers
- Hiring additional special educators to reduce the workload of individual teachers
 Additionally, it is significant to note that a few of the respondents indicated that
 their district was part of the ADE's pilot paperwork reduction program and their
 comments were positive. For instance, one respondent stated,"[My school district] is part
 of a test program to reduce paperwork for special ed. teachers. So far, it's really helped
 reduce my stress and increased my time to teach bell to bell in my classroom." Another
 respondent stated," The district is working very hard with the state to minimize the
 amount of paperwork and redundant paperwork that is required. I think continuing this
 process will help.

School climate. Finally, district-level administrators and building principals should consider improvements in the school climate. According to data from research question three, 117 special education teachers indicated a lack of respect or prestige as one a reason for wanting to leave the profession. Additionally, 72 special educators also

marked having a negative school climate and another 22 indicated negative teacherstudent relationships.

Data from research question three also indicated a desire for increased respect for special educators. For example, one respondent wrote, "Show more respect for the job SPED teachers do. We often feel undervalued, and not part of the team. As a result, we often feel forgotten." Similarly, another respondent stated, "View special education teachers as equals to general education teachers." Another respondent stated, "CARE! Give us the same regard as regular teachers." Lastly, a respondent wrote, "Show appreciation. Anything really, Anything."

Therefore, some of the strategies school leaders may consider to improve their school climate for special education teachers and students include:

- Conveying a positive attitude towards special education to improve respect and prestige in the profession
- Welcoming, soliciting, and considering special educators' ideas and opinions
- Ensuring that the special education classes are equal in aesthetics and size to the general education classrooms
- Fostering a climate that allows collaborative communication and planning between special educators and general education teachers

Policymakers. This section will provide implications and recommendations for state and federal educational policymakers based on the conclusion drawn from this study.

Funding. Providing districts with adequate funding to attract and retain special education teachers is essential to fill vacant positions in this severe shortage area with

qualified, quality teachers. The results of this study indicate that adding financial incentives for special educators may be one way to reduce the shortage and attract additional teachers to the field. While it may be possible for some districts to incentivize special educators on their own, other districts, especially those with lower salary schedules, may need additional financial support to stay competitive in a scarce market. Examples of how districts within this study are currently incentivizing special educators include:

- Additional contract days
- Additional stipends
- Tuition reimbursement
- Bonuses

Respondents to this study also suggested there is a need for increased support, resources, and training to reduce the high rate of turnover. Therefore, increased funding at the state and federal level for local school districts may be needed to provide additional special education training to both school leaders and special education teachers. General education teachers could also benefit from this funding because 55% of special education students receive instruction in a general education setting at least 80% of the time ("HESCSE Shortages of Special Education Expertise," 2014).

Since beginning special educators are the most susceptible to attrition, funding could be used to implement induction programs (Brownell et al., 2004). Supplementary funding could also allow school districts to provide ongoing high-quality professional development for both novices and experienced special education teachers, specific to their teaching role. Providing special educators with these types of role specific

preparation programs may equip them with the organizational skills needed to allocate their time more effectively. Thus, allowing special educators more time to complete paperwork and provide high-quality instruction to students with disabilities.

Workload issues. Policymakers should also consider legislation to reduce the number of student files individual special educators can legally hold. While the passing of such legislation would initially place a burden on districts to find additional special education teachers, over the long term special educators would have lower teacher-student ratios, smaller class sizes, less paperwork, and a reduced workload. In turn, special educators would have more time to spend with individual special education students, lesson plan, and provide quality instruction to their students.

Additionally, policymakers need to urge the ADE to continue their efforts to reduce the required amount of special education paperwork. Paperwork, as detailed in this study, creates a significant burden on special educators and is one of the leading causes of stress, burnout, and wanting to the leave the profession. Even though paperwork reduction will not solve every issue identified in this study, it could be a major step in the right direction.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that may affect special education teacher recruitment and retention efforts within the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region through the examination of seven research-based questions. This study included survey data from 30 public school districts and 401 special education teachers from within the region. From the results of this study, the following recommendations for

future research may help bring further understanding to the issues faced special educators and their desire to enter, remain in, or leave the profession.

- This study was limited to the geographical area of the Northwest Arkansas/River Valley region. Therefore, future studies should consider expanding the sample size to include larger demographic areas or this study could be replicated in other areas of the state for comparison purposes.
- While this study did allow respondents to give their opinion when answering the
 three open response questions, future research may want to include additional
 open response questions or more in-depth interviews to gain a better perspective
 from individual special education teachers.
- This study indicated paperwork to be a critical issue for special education teachers' intent to remain in the profession. Therefore, additional research regarding the efforts of the ADE in the area of paperwork reduction should be conducted. Surveying or interviewing special educators who took part in the pilot program may give additional insight to the extent that paperwork was reduced and the effect it had on special education teachers' levels of job satisfaction and retention rates.
- This study indicated the majority of districts within the region do not offer special educators financial incentives. However, the study also indicated there were a small number of districts that do provide special educators with financial incentives. Therefore, future research may attempt to identify those schools that are providing special education teachers with financial incentives to compare

them against those districts who are not in the areas of recruitment, retention, job satisfaction, commitment, and school climate.

Final Summary

As a building principal responsible for recruiting and retaining special education teachers within my school, this study helped me better understand the varying roles and responsibilities that special education teachers are tasked with each day. This study also provided me with insight into the many challenges that special educators face each and every day and made me reflect on my actions as a school leader as it pertains to supporting my special education staff. Do my special education teachers know how much I value their work? Am I providing them with adequate training and resources? Do the feel like an important part of the team?

The results of this study are clear unless significant changes are made in how special education teachers are recruited, trained, and supported, the special education teacher shortage will continue. While the state of Arkansas is actively attempting to address the issue of burdensome special education paperwork through its paperwork reduction study, much more could be done at the state level and by individual school districts to address the needs and concerns of special educators. Using the information and data provided from this study, it is my hope that school leaders and districts who struggle to attract and retain qualified special education teachers may reflect on their current practices and implement positive systematic changes to address the needs of their current and future special education teachers and students.

References

- Adera, B. A., & Bullock, L. M. (2010). Job stressors and teacher job satisfaction in programs serving students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties*, 15(1), 5-14. doi:10.1080/13632750903512365
- Ansley, B. M., Houchins, D., & Varjas, K. (2016). Optimizing special educator wellness and job performance through stress management. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 48, 176-185. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0040059915626128
- Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research. (2016). *Teacher recruitment and retention*(Project No. 16-001-42). Retrieved from

 http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/Meeting%20Attachments/410/I1436

 3/Teacher%20Recruitment%20and%20Retention.pdf
- Arkansas Department of Education. (n.d.). Add licensure area to license. Retrieved from http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/human-resources-educator-effectiveness-and-licensure/educator-licensure-unit/add-licensure-area-to-license
- Arkansas Department of Education. (n.d.). Critical academic licensure shortage areas 2015-2016 school year. Retrieved from http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/HR_and_Educator_Effectiveness/HR_Educator_Licensure/15-16_shortage_areas_flattened_text.pdf
- Arkansas Department of Education. (2012). Rules governing highy qualified teachers promulgated pursuant to the no child left behind act of 2001 (Arkansas Department of Education No. 220-14). Retrieved from Arkansas Department of Education website: http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/rulesRegs/Arkansas%20Register /2012/Mar12Reg/005.15.11-005.pdf

- Arkansas Department of Education. (2015). Teacher induction/mentoring glossary. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles

 /HR_and_Educator_Effectiveness/HR_EducatorEffectiveness/Induction

 _Mentoring/Teacher_Induction_Mentoring_Glossary_rev-93517._6.10.15.
- Ax, M., Conderman, G., & Stephens, J. T. (2001). Principal support essential for retaining special educators. *NASSP Bulletin*, 85(621), 66-70. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/216043088?accountid=8364
- Berry, A. B., Petrin, R. A., Gravelle, M. L., & Farmer, T. W. (2011). Issues in special education teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development:

 Considerations in supporting rural teachers. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 30(4), 3-11. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/ 919589053?

 accountid=8364
- Billingsley, B. S. (2004a). Promoting teacher quality and retention in special education. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *37*(5), 370-376. Retrieved from
 http://search.proquest.com/docview/194222635?accountid=8364
- Billingsley, B. S. (2004b). Special education teacher retention and attrition: A critical analysis of the research literature. *The Journal of Special Education*, *38*(1), 39-55. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/194705314?accountid=8364
- Billingsley, B., Carlson, E., & Klein, S. (2004). The working conditions and induction support of early career special educators. *Exceptional Children*, 70, 333-347.

 Retrieved from https://libcatalog.atu.edu:443/login?url=http://libcatalog.atu.edu: 2081/docview/201220463?accountid=8364

- Billingsley, B. S., & Cross, L. H. (1992). Predictors of commitment, job satisfaction, and intent to stay in teaching: A comparison of general and special educators. The *Journal of Special Education*, 25(4), 453-471.
- Billingsley, B. S., Pyecha, J. N., Smith-Davis, J., Murray, K., & Hendricks, M. B. (1995). *Improving the retention of special education teachers* (Final Report. RTI Project 5168). Research Triangle Park, NC: Center for Research in Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED379860). Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED379860.pdf
- Boe, E. E., Bobbitt, S. A., Cook, L. H., Whitener, S. D., & Weber, A. L. (1997). Why didst thou go? Predictors of retention, transfer, and attrition of special and general education teachers from a national perspective. *The Journal of Special Education*, 30(4), 390-411. doi:10.1177/002246699703000403
- Boe, E. E., & Cook, L. H. (2006). The chronic and increasing shortage of fully certified teachers in special and general education. *Exceptional Children*, 72(4), 443-460. Retrieved from http://libcatalog.atu.edu:2059/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=db0818b2-9866-46e5-97b0 208dfc7d3bcb%40sessionmgr115&hid=123&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=507902330&db=eue
- Brownell, M. T., Hirsch, E., & Seo, S. (2004). Meeting the demand for highly qualified special education teachers during severe shortages: What should policymakers consider? *The Journal of Special Education*, *38*(1), 56-61. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/194703311?accountid=8364

- Brunsting, N. C., Sreckovic, M. A., & Lane, K. L. (2014). Special education teacher burnout: A synthesis of research from 1979 to 2013. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *37*(4), 681-712. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/
- Butler, K. (2008). Desperately seeking special ed teachers. *District Administration*, 44(13), 23-26. Retrieved from http://libcatalog.atu.edu:2080/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=1fe3603d-e794-4085-991f-e938ec7bfe61%40sessionmgr4005 &vid=10&hid=4204
- Carlson, E., Brauen, M., Klein, S., Schroll, K., & Willig, S., (2002). *Spense: Study of personnel needs in special education* (ED-00-CO-0010). Washington, DC:

 Government Printing Office.
- CEC Launches Initiative on Special Education Teaching Conditions, (1998, February/March). *CEC Today*, 2(7), 2.
- Chapman, A. (n.d.). *Frederick Herzberg's motivational theory*. Retrieved from http://www.businessballs.com/herzberg.htm
- College Foundation of North Carolina. (n.d.). The need grows for special education teachers in the U.S. Retrieved from https://www1.cfnc.org/Plan/For_A_Career/Career_Cluster_Profile/Cluster_Articl e.aspx?articleId=wmpz3NDihGoZXAP2BPAXoj8Gw4PFAXAP3DPAXXAP3D PAX&cId=BI1JKTSUyth8XAP2FPAXn7VPoxI8gXAP3DPAXXAP3DPAX&se ctionId=3

- Connelly, V., & Graham, S. (2009). Student teaching and teacher attrition in special education. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 32(3), 257-269. doi:10.1177/0888406409339472
- Cooley Nichols, S. M., Bicard, S. C., Bicard, D. F., & Baylot Casey, L. (2008). A field at risk: The teacher shortage in special education. *Phi Delta Kappan International*, 89(8), 597-600. doi:10.1177/003172170808900813
- Correa, V. I., & Wagner, J. Y. (2011). Principals' roles in supporting the induction of special education teachers. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 24(1), 17-25.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Cross, F. (2015). *Teacher shortage areas nationwide listing 1990-1991 through 2016- 2017*. Retrieved from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary
 Education website; https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/pol/tsa.pdf
- Cross, L. H., & Billingsley, B. S. (1994). Testing a model of special educators' intent to stay in teaching. *Exceptional Children*, 60(5), 411-421. Retrieved from https://libcatalog.atu.edu:443/login?url=http://libcatalog.atu.edu:2081/docview/20 1142084?accountid=8364
- Dinham, S., & Scott, C. (1998). A three domain model of teacher and school executive career satisfaction. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *36*(4), 362-378.

 Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/220458150?accountid=8364

- Duesbery, L., & Werblow, J. (2008). How to retain special education teachers. *Principal*, 6, 1-2. Retrieved from https://www.naesp.org/resources/1/Principal/2008/N-Oweb1.pdf
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ford, J. (2013). Educating students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

 *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education, 3(1), 1-21. Retrieved from http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1154&context =ejie
- Fore, III, C., Martin, C., & Bender, W. N. (2002). Teacher burnout in special education:

 The causes and the recommended solutions. *The High School Journal*, 86(1), 36-44. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docvi39ew/220223955?

 accountid=8364
- Gardner, D. P. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. Retrieved from ERIC Institute of Education Sciences website: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED226006.pdf
- Gehrke, R. S., & McCoy, K. (2007). Considering the context: Differences between the environments of beginning special educators who stay and those who leave.

 *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 26(3), 32-40. Retrieved from
 http://search.proquest.com/docview/227211629?accountid=8364

- Gersten, R., Keating, T., Yovanoff, P., & Harniss, M. K. (2001). Working in special education: Factors that enhance special educators' intent to stay. *Exceptional Children*, 67, 549-567. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/201225539?accountid=8364
- Goldstein, L. (2003). Disabled by paperwork? *Education Week*, 22(38), 1-23. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/202703434?accountid=8364
- Green, J. D. (2011). Factors related to special education teacher job commitment: A study of one large metropolitan school district in southern california (Order No. 3448975). Available from Education Database. (861041377). Retrieved from https://libcatalog.atu.edu:443/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/861041377?accountid=8364
- Griffin, C. C., & Kilgore, K. L. (1998). Beginning special educators: Problems of practice and the influence of school context. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 21(3), 155-173. doi:10.1177/088840649802100302
- Harriman, N. E. (2005). Perceptions of students and educators on the impact of no child left behind: Some will and some won't. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 24(1), 64-69. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/ 227194847? accountid=8364
- Henke, R. R., Choy, S. P., Chen, X., Geis, S., & Alt, M. N. (1997). *America's teachers: Profile of a profession 1993-1994* (National Center for Education Statistics No. 97-460). Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics website:

 https://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97460.pdf

- Herzberg, F. (1959). *The motivation to work*. New York: Wiley.
- Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (2014). Shortages of special education expertise among teachers and higher education faculty. Retrieved from http://specialedshortages.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/HECSE-Shortage-Special-Ed-Expertise-Among-Teachers-Faculty.pdf
- Hochberg, E. D., & Desimone, L. M. (2010). Professional development in the accountability context: Building capacity to achieve standards. *Educational Psychologist*, 45(2), 89-106. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/204149236?accountid=8364
- Johnson, G., & Bonaiuto, S. (2008). Accountability with roots. *Educational Leadership*, 66(4), 26-29.
- Jones, N. D., Youngs, P., & Frank, K. A. (2013). The role of school-based colleagues in shaping the commitment of novice special and general education teachers.

 *Council for Exceptional Children, 79, 365-383. Retrieved from http://libcatalog.atu.edu:2066/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=f2dac88b-8ed5-47e4-b8c9-b066daefbb0c%40sessionmgr4006&vid=5&hid=4201
- Legislative Task Force on the Best Practices for Special Education. (2016). Legislative task force on the best practices for special education draft report. Retrieved from http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/Meeting%20Attachments/098/I1442 1/EXHIBIT%20C-%20Draft%20Final%20Report.pdf

- Leko, M. M., Brownell, M. T., Sindelar, P. T., & Kiely, M. T. (2015). Envisioning the future of special education personnel preparation in a standards-based era.

 Exceptional Children, 82(1), 25-43. Retrieved from https://libcatalog.atu.edu

 :443/loginurl=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1719015849?accountid=8364
- Leko, M. M., & Smith, S. W. (2010). Retaining beginning special educators: What should administrators know and do? *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 45(5), 321-325. doi:10.1177/1053451209353441
- McLeskey, J., Tyler, N. C., & Flippin, S. S. (2004). The supply of and demand for special education teachers: A review of research regarding the chronic shortage of special education teachers. *The Journal of Special Education*, *38*(1), 5-21. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/194703783?accountid=8364
- Nance, E., & Calabrese, R. L. (2009). Special education teacher retention and attrition:

 The impact of increased legal requirements. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 23, 431-440. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09513540910970520
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The condition of education*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp
- National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services.

 (2014). Special education personnel shortages factsheet. Retrieved from
 http://specialedshortages.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/NCPSSERS-Fact-Sheet.pdf
- No child left behind: A toolkit for Teachers. (2009). Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/teachers/nclbguide/toolkit_pg10.html

- Plash, S., & Piotrowski, C. (2006). Retention issues: A study of Alabama special education teachers. *Education*, *127*(1), 125-128. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/196417672?accountid=8364
- Rock, M. L., & Billingsley, B. S. (2015). We've got issues. In B. Bateman, J. Lloyd, & M. Tankersley (Eds.). *Enduring issues in special education: Personal perspectives* (pp. 169-170). Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?hi =en7lr=&id=i2PABgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA168&dq=special+education+ teacher+recruitment+retention+and+attrition+and+attrition&ots=TwgEoFAktC&s ig=eUKlyhEZaejjm4xlMG1A_oNiWc#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Russ, S., Chiang, B., Rylance, B. J., & Bongers, J. (2001). Caseload in special education:

 An integration of research findings. *Exceptional Children*, 67(2), 161-172.

 doi:10.1177/001440290106700202
- Smith, T. M., & Ingersol, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681-714. doi:10.3102/00028312041003681
- Sobel, D. M., & Taylor, S. V. (2015). Supporting novice special education teachers in delivering inclusive, culturally responsive instruction. *The Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, *16*(1), 33-41. Retrieved from http://libcatalog.atu.edu:2066/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=06d62b71-de61-4556-ae2b-c52981c27630%40sessionmgr4009&vid=4&hid=4201

- Stempien, L. R., & Loeb, R. C. (2002). Differences in job satisfaction between general education and special education teachers: Implications for retention. *Remedial and Special Education*, 23(5), 258-267. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/236323103?accountid=8364
- Theoharis, R. (2008). Factors related to attrition: A study of one midwestern university special education program's graduates (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (UMI No. 3341727)
- Thornton, B., Peltier, G., & Medina, R. (2007). Reducing the special education teacher shortage. *The Clearing House*, 80(5), 233-238. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/196844414?accountid=8364
- Tonnsen, S., & Patterson, S. (1992). Fighting first-year jitters. *Executive Educator*, 14(1), 29-30.
- University of Arkansas Office for Education Policy. (2005). *Teacher shortages in Arkansas*. Retrieved from http://www.officeforeducationpolicy.org/downloads/2005/01/teacher-shortages-in-arkansas.pdf
- University of Washington, Disabilities, Opportunities, Interworking, and Technology.

 (2015). What is the difference between an IEP and a 504 plan? Retrieved from http://www.washington.edu/doit/what-difference-between-iep-and-504-plan
- Westling, D. L., & Whitten, T. M. (1996). Rural special education teachers' plans to continue or leave their teaching positions. *Exceptional Children*, 62(4), 319-335.

 Retrieved from https://libcatalog.atu.edu:443/login?url= http://libcatalog.atu.edu: 2081/docview/201195690?accountid=8364

- Whitaker, S. D. (2000). Mentoring beginning special education teachers and the relationship to attrition. *Exceptional Children*, 66(4), 546-566. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/201214185?accountid=8364
- Whitaker, S. D. (2001). Supporting beginning special education teachers. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, *34*(4), 1-18. Retrieved from https://libcatalog.atu.edu:443 /login?url=http://libcatalog.atu.edu:2081/docview/224047040?accountid=8364
- Willis, S. (1999). The accountability question. *Education Update*, *41*(7). Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education-update/nov99/vol41/num07/The-Accountability-Question.aspx
- Wisniewski, L., & Gargiulo, R. M. (1997). Occupational stress and burnout among special educators: A review of the literature. *The Journal of Special Education*, 31(3), 325-346. doi:10.1177/002246699703100303

Appendix A

IRB Approval Email

2/11/2017

Greenwood Public Schools Mail - IRB Approved



Chatman, Cody <cody.chatman@greenwoodk12.com>

IRB Approved

Tiffany Henry <thenry1@atu.edu>
To: *Chatman, Cody Lee* <cchatman@atu.edu>
Cc: John Freeman <jfreeman44@atu.edu>, Jack Tucci <jtucci@atu.edu>

Tue, Oct 18, 2016 at 1:56 PM

Mr. Chatman,

Your IRB application is approved with approval number Chatman_101816. It expires 10/18/19.

Thank you,

Tiffany A. Henry

Coordinator of Sponsored Programs and University Initiatives

Arkansas Tech University

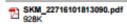
1509 N Boulder Ave

Administration 207

Russellville, AR 72801

479.880.4327

This e-mail message, including any attachments, is for the sole use for the intended recipient and may contain confidential and privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please destroy all copies of the message.



https://mail.google.com/mail/u0/7ui=25ik=b22efc63c75view=p55q=thenry1940abuedu5qs=true5search=query5msg=157d026t02e415978siml=157d026t02e4... 1/1

Appendix B

Consent from Dr. Joseph Green

Doctoral Dissertation Research - Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage

Inbox x

Chatman, 2:23 PM (21 hours ago)
Cody <cody.chatman@greenwoodk12.com>

to joseph.green, John

Dr. Green,

My name is Cody Chatman and I am an administrator for the Greenwood School District located in Greenwood, Arkansas. My present position is Principal of the Greenwood Freshman Center. Prior to this position, I served as Principal of Greenwood Junior High, Assistant Principal of Greenwood Junior High, and Assistant Principal of Russellville Middle School located in Russellville, AR. Overall, this is my 8th year in school administration.

Currently, I am beginning the dissertation portion of my doctoral program at Arkansas Tech University. My topic is *Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage*. Like in many other states, Arkansas has suffered from a lack of certified teachers in the area of special education for some time and it is currently our greatest certification need.

Through research, for my literature review, I came upon your dissertation and the survey instrument you used to gather data for your study. I am requesting permission to replicate parts of the survey instrument used in your 2011 study, "Factors Related to Special Education Teacher Job Commitment: A Study of One Large Metropolitan School District in Southern California". I do realize that your survey instrument was borrowed in part from Billingsley and Cross (1995) and Theoharis (2008). Therefore, I am also willing to request permission from those sources if my dissertation committee members feel it would be appropriate.

I hope you will consider my request. If you have any questions, please feel free to reply to this email or call me at 479-597-8227.

Thanks,

--

Cody Chatman Principal Greenwood Freshman Center (479)996-4141

"Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an everlengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb.

Sir Winston Churchill

Joseph Green

3:40 PM (20 hours ago)

to me, John

Dear Cody,

Yes, you have my permission to borrow any and all portions of the survey instrument that appeared in my dissertation. Please be sure to cite my study, as appropriate. Also, please do follow up with Drs. Billingsley and Theoharis for additional permissions. I found them both to be very accommodating and willing to share.

Let me know if I can be of any further assistance to you.

I wish you the best.

Dr. Joseph Green

Joseph D. Green, Ed.D.
Adjunct Professor and Ombudsperson
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Education Division
6100 Center Drive, 5th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Appendix C

Consent from Dr. Bonnie Billingsley

Chatman, 11/15/16
Cody <cody.chatman@greenwoodk12.com>

to bbilling

Dr. Billingsley,

My name is Cody Chatman and I am an administrator for the Greenwood School District located in Greenwood, Arkansas. My present position is Principal of the Greenwood Freshman Center. Prior to this position, I served as Principal of Greenwood Junior High, Assistant Principal of Greenwood Junior High, and Assistant Principal of Russellville Middle School located in Russellville, AR. Overall, this is my 8th year in school administration.

Currently, I am beginning the dissertation portion of my doctoral program at Arkansas Tech University. My topic is *Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage*. Like in many other states, Arkansas has suffered from a lack of certified teachers in the area of special education for some time and it is currently our greatest certification need.

Through research, for my literature review, I came upon a dissertation and survey instrument developed by Dr. Joseph Green at Pepperdine University. It was then I discovered that parts of Dr. Green's 2011 study, "Factors Related to Special Education Teacher Job Commitment: A Study of One Large Metropolitan School District in Southern California" were borrowed from earlier studies conducted by Billingsley and Cross (1995) and Theoharis (2008).

As you can see in my email correspondence with Dr. Green below, he has agreed to allow me to borrow any and all portions of the survey instrument that appeared in his dissertation. However, he has also requested that I seek permission from you and Dr. Theoharis as well. Therefore, I am requesting your permission to proceed with my study, using the survey instrument from Dr. Green's 2011 study.

I hope you will consider my request. If you have any questions, please feel free to reply to this email or call me at 479-597-8227.

Thank You,

<u>.</u>

Billingsley, Bonnie

billing@vt.edu>

11/17/16

to me

Hi Cody,

It depends on which instrument this was as I published it in more than one place. Sometimes journals hold the copyright and I cannot give permission. So please let me know which specific instrument as I have developed more than one.

В

From: "Chatman, Cody" <cody.chatman@greenwoodk12.com>

Subject: Fwd: Doctoral Dissertation Research - Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage

Chatman, 11/17/16

cody <cody.chatman@greenwoodk12.com>

to Bonnie

Dr. Billingsley,

Thank you for returning my email. I am sorry I was not more specific. The survey instrument is **The Memphis City Special Education Questionnaire** from your 1995 study titled *Improving the Retention of Special Education* Teachers. I have attached a PDF copy of the study to this email.

Thank you,

Attachments area

Billingsley, Bonnie

billing@vt.edu>

11/29/16

to me

Hi Cody,

I do not have a problem with you using it and it isn't copyrighted. Please just attribute it to the source.

All the best,

В

Appendix D

Special Education Teacher Survey

Demographic (Participant Background Information)

- 1. What is your total number of years teaching (general and special education)?
- 2. What is your number of years teaching special education?
- 3. What is your teaching setting?
 - a. Elementary (Grades PK 5)
 - b. Middle Level (Grades 6 8)
 - c. Secondary (Grades 9 12)
- 4. How would you define your current teaching role?
 - a. Self-contained
 - b. Inclusion
 - c. Resource
 - d. Support services (Interventionist, speech therapy, building level designee, etc.)
- 5. Do you have all the required credentials to be certified for your current position? (If you are currently serving on an alternative licensure plan (ALP) for special education, please select NO.)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 6. Are you currently teaching special education under an Arkansas ALP waiver or have you ever been placed on an Arkansas ALP for the purposes of teaching special education?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 7. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. Bachelor's Degree
 - b. Bachelor's Degree + additional hours
 - c. Master's Degree
 - d. Master's Degree + additional hours
 - e. Doctorate Degree
- 8. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

- 9. What is your ethnicity/race? (Indicate all that apply.)
 - a. African American/Black
 - b. Native American or Alaska Native
 - c. Asian American
 - d. Caucasian
 - e. Hispanic/Latino
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - g. Other (please specify)

Job Satisfaction

- 10. For the following list of items regarding job satisfaction, please indicate your current level of satisfaction or lack thereof using the following Likert scale:
 - 1 Very Dissatisfied 2 Dissatisfied 3 Have no opinion/Neutral 4 Satisfied 5 Very Satisfied
 - a. Salary
 - b. Importance and challenge
 - c. Working conditions
 - d. Opportunity for promotion and advancement
 - e. Opportunity to use past training and education
 - f. Supervisor(s)
 - g. Relationship with students
 - h. Relationship with colleagues
 - i. Job as a whole

Stress

- 11. For the following list of statements regarding stress and the various feelings that you experience concerning your job as a special educator, please indicate the extent to which you agree using the following Likert Scale:
 - 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Have no opinion/Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree
 - a. You carry problems from your work home with you.
 - b. The amount of special education paperwork you have to complete interferes with how well you perform your instructional duties.
 - c. Your work as a special education teacher places you under a great deal pressure and/or stress.
 - d. You would like to quit your job as a special education teacher.

Commitment (the degree to which a worker has a desire to stay in the profession)

- 12. For the following list of statements regarding your views about teaching in the field of special education, please indicate the extent to which you agree using the following Likert Scale:
 - 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Have no opinion/Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree
 - a. I would accept almost any type of job assignment in this profession (self-contained, inclusion, or resource).
 - b. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this profession.
 - c. If given the opportunity to teach in a general classroom setting, you would leave your current position as a special education teacher.
 - d. For me, this is the best of all possible professions in which to work.
 - e. Deciding to work in this profession was a definite mistake on my part.

Career Longevity (Multiple Choice)

- 13. How long are you planning to remain teaching in special education?
 - a. As long as I am able, even if that's after retirement age.
 - b. Until I am eligible for retirement.
 - c. Undecided
 - d. Will probably continue unless something better comes along.
 - e. Definitely plan to leave special education as soon as I can.

Reasons for Wanting to Leave Special Education

- 14. Below is a list of possible reasons that might be true for you if you are wanting to leave the special education teaching profession. Please select all of the reasons that apply to you.
 - a. Class size issues
 - b. Community issues (e.g., teaching in an undesirable or violent community)
 - c. Family reasons (e.g., homemaking, child rearing, spouse, or partner relocating for new job)
 - d. Inadequate resources (e.g., lack of necessary supplies, textbooks, etc.)
 - e. Lack of administrative support
 - f. Lack of parental involvement support
 - g. Lack of time to interact with colleagues
 - h. Lack of respect or prestige
 - i. Negative school climate
 - j. Negative teacher-student relationships
 - k. Paperwork issues
 - 1. Pursue nonteaching employment opportunities in the field of education

- m. Retirement
- n. Return to graduate school
- o. Student discipline issues
- p. Salary issues
- q. Workload issues
- r. Other (please specify)

Career Plans

15. If you are planning to leave within the next 3 to 5 years, please indicate what you hope to be doing after leaving your current special education position. Please check all that may apply.

I plan to:

- a. Obtain a promotion within the school or district
- b. Pursue a graduate degree full time, in a non-education field
- c. Pursue a graduate degree full time, in special education
- d. Pursue a graduate degree full time, not in special education
- e. Remain in my current special education position more than 3 to 5 years
- f. Retire
- g. Seek employment in a nonteaching job in education (e.g., special education supervisor, administrator, counselor, instructional facilitator, etc.)
- h. Seek employment outside of education
- i. Stay at home (e.g., child rearing, providing elder care, homemaking)
- j. Teach general education in another school district
- k. Teach general education in the same school or district
- 1. Teach special education in another school district
- m. Other (please specify)

Open Response Questions

Improving Special Education Teacher Job Satisfaction, Recruitment, and Retention

- 16. As most people know, there is a high rate of turnover for teachers in special education. What, if anything, could the district do to improve your desire to remain teaching in special education?
- 17. Does your district already provide teachers with additional incentives to entice them to enter or remain in the field of special education? If so, what additional incentives do they currently provide? (e.g., additional contract days, stipends, planning periods, tuition reimbursement, bonuses, etc,)
- 18. What was the main reason you chose to enter into the special education teaching profession? (e.g., a heart for special education students, additional incentives, could not find job as a general education teacher, etc.)

Appendix E

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Hire, Train, Retain: Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage Purpose of Study

I understand the purpose of this study is to gather and analyze information regarding current recruitment and retention efforts of special education teachers within Arkansas. I understand that I will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey will be a Research Study which I will be asked to answer 18 questions pertaining to my job as a special education teacher. The estimated time to complete the survey is between 10 to 15 minutes. This study has been authorized by the Institute Review Board for a Human Subjects Review at Arkansas Tech University.

Research Study Survey

I understand that this survey will be anonymous and no personal information will be collected. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate my personal information with the data collected. This Research Study Survey will consist of 18 multiple choice, Likert-type, and/or open-response questions. Some of the questions will be personal in nature. I understand that participating in this survey is not mandatory and I am free to not participate in this study if I so choose. Additionally, I am free to withdraw from the survey at any time before I click submit.

Benefits

Information from this study may be shared with the Arkansas Department of Education, school districts within Arkansas, and/or special education advocacy groups.

Hopefully, the information from this study will help Arkansas schools become better prepared to recruit and retain special educators.

Risks

I understand that I may suffer minimal discomfort or stress while participating in this research study.

Questions or Concerns

If I have questions or concerns regarding this research study or wish to obtain a copy of the findings once completed, I may contact Cody Chatman at cchatman@atu.edu or by phone at 479-597-8227, Dr. John Freeman at Arkansas Tech University at jfreeman44@atu.edu, or the Arkansas Tech Institutional Review Board at jtucci@atu.edu or 479-968-0319.

Statement of Consent

By clicking yes, I agree with the following statement: I am currently serving as a special education teacher, I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Appendix F

Recruitment Email to Superintendents/Special Education Directors

Dear Superintendents and/or Special Education Directors,

My name is Cody Chatman, and I am an administrator within the Greenwood School District located in Greenwood, Arkansas. My present position is Principal of the Greenwood Freshman Center. Prior to this position, I served as Principal of Greenwood Junior High, Assistant Principal of Greenwood Junior High, and Assistant Principal of Russellville Middle School located in Russellville, AR. Overall, this is my 8th year in school administration.

Currently, I am beginning the dissertation portion of my doctoral program at Arkansas Tech University. My title is *Hire, Train, Retain: Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage*. Similar to many other states, Arkansas has suffered from a lack of certified teachers in the area of special education for some time, and it is currently our greatest certification need.

The purpose of this mixed methods study will be to improve special education teacher recruitment and retention within Arkansas through examination of the factors contributing to the current special education teacher shortage. The study will seek to identify the most prevalent factors that influence special educators to enter, remain in, or leave the field of special education.

This study will target teachers currently serving in the area of special education who work for the 38 member school districts of the Guy Fenter and Northwest Arkansas Educational Cooperatives, located in the Northwest corner of Arkansas. Data will be collected through Survey Monkey, a web-based survey tool, and will occur over a one month period during November and/or December.

Therefore, I am requesting the following information from each district superintendent and/or special education director in order to complete my study:

- First, I am requesting written permission to complete the survey within your school district. A simple reply to this email granting permission will be sufficient.
- Secondly, if given permission, the survey can be disseminated in one of the following two ways:
 - 1. I can send you, or a person you designate, an email containing information regarding the survey along with a link that would allow special education teachers access to the survey. Then you, or your designee, can forward the email and link to each of those teachers working within your district.
 - 2. You may reply to this email with an attachment containing your special education teachers' email addresses. Then I will email each of the special education teachers within your district

 directly. Keep in mind, even though I have access to participants email addresses, the survey will still be anonymous. Survey monkey will not collect any personal identification data on individual teachers including IP addresses.

In addition to the survey, I plan on sending two reminders to complete the survey throughout the month. These two reminders would need to be disseminated in the same way as the original survey.

Please let me know if you will be able to provide this information. If you have any questions/concerns, please feel free to contact me through email or by phone. My work phone number is 479-996-4141, and my cell phone number is 479-597-8227. I would be glad to share the work I have completed up to this point, a copy of the teacher survey, my IRB approval letter, or any other documentation you would like to review to prior to making your decision.

Thank you,

Cody Chatman Principal Greenwood Freshman Center

Appendix G

Thank You and Follow-up Letter to Superintendents and/or Special Education Directors

Dear, Superintendent and/or Special Education Director

Thank you again for allowing me to survey the special education teachers within your district(s).

Please forward the following email (you will receive a second email, immediately following this one) to each of the special education teachers currently serving within your district(s). The following email will contain:

- Information regarding the survey,
- an invitation for special education teachers to participate in the survey, and
- a link allowing access to the Informed Consent Form and survey.

Please keep in mind, the survey is only intended for special education teachers. Therefore, speech therapists, school psychology specialists, special education directors, general education teachers, special education aides, principals, and/or other school employees should not participate in the survey.

The survey will be open for a period of 30 days. Throughout the 30 day period, I will send two reminder emails that will also need to be forwarded. The reminder emails will be sent to you on Wednesday, November 16th and Wednesday, November 23rd. The purpose of these two reminder emails is to hopefully improve the response rate for the survey. In addition, any encouragement you could give to your special education teachers to complete the survey would also be GREATLY appreciated.

Lastly, to help me track the rate of response, can you please send me the number of special education teachers within your district(s) that will receive the survey?

Thank You.

Cody Chatman
Principal
Greenwood Freshman Center

Appendix H

Recruitment Letter for Survey to Special Education Teachers

Dear Special Education Teachers,

Your participation in this brief survey will be GREATLY appreciated!

My name is Cody Chatman, and I am an administrator within the Greenwood School District located in Greenwood, Arkansas. My present position is Principal of the Greenwood Freshman Center. Prior to this position, I served as Principal of Greenwood Junior High, Assistant Principal of Greenwood Junior High, and Assistant Principal of Russellville Middle School located in Russellville, AR. Overall, this is my 8th year in school administration.

Currently, I am beginning the dissertation portion of my doctoral program at Arkansas Tech University. My title is *Hire, Train, Retain: Addressing the Arkansas Special Education Teacher Shortage*. Similar to many other states, Arkansas has suffered from a lack of certified teachers in the area of special education for some time, and it is currently our greatest certification need.

The purpose of this mixed methods study will be to improve special education teacher recruitment and retention within Arkansas through examination of the factors contributing to the current special education teacher shortage. The study will seek to identify the most prevalent factors that influence special educators to enter, remain in, or leave the field of special education.

This study will target teachers currently serving in the area of special education who work for the 38 member school districts of the Guy Fenter and Northwest Arkansas Educational Cooperatives, located in the Northwest corner of Arkansas. Data will be collected through Survey Monkey, a web-based survey tool.

The survey will be anonymous and no personal information will be collected. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate any information gained from the survey back to any one individual. The survey will be open for a period of 30 days. It will consist of 18 questions and the estimated time for completion is between five to ten minutes.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation! Without your participation, I would not be able to complete this dissertation process. Please click the link below to complete the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7ZWBXPV	
Special Education Teacher Survey	

Appendix I

Reminder Email for Survey Completion to Special Education Teachers

Dear Special Education Teachers,

Recently you should have received an email requesting your participation in an online survey regarding special education teacher recruitment and retention. If you completed the survey, thank you for your participation and support. If you have yet to take the survey, please consider participating by clicking the link below:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7ZWBXPV

The survey will be anonymous and no personal information will be collected. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate any information gained from the survey back to any one individual, school, or district. The survey will consist of 18 questions and the estimated time for completion is between five to ten minutes.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation! Without your participation, I would not be able to complete this dissertation process.

Sincerely,