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A qualitative study of factors that influence the retention of highly qualified special education teachers.

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE RETENTION OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

KIMBERLY C. GORE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Employee retention has become a key focus for human resource professionals. Companies and organizations are calculating (based on current cost per hire data) that hundreds of thousands of dollars can be saved annually by reducing employee turnover. Nowhere is this more important than our public school systems. For example, a school system with roughly 10,000 teachers and an estimated turnover rate of 20% would stand to save approximately $500,000 a year by reducing turnover by just one percentage point. Not only would reduced turnover provide monetary savings, more importantly, it would provide savings in our children's educational future. A motivated and experienced team of teaching professionals directly correlates with an improved educational system (Frank & McKenzie, 2003). Various lawmakers, administrators, and union officials have proposed many ideas to improve teacher retention in the area of educating exceptional children. While the intentions of these officials are good, the ideas are generally based on guesswork or at best, what seems to be working in other locales. Increasing teacher salaries is often regarded as a panacea, yet it is clear that good teachers enter the field for reasons other than money. The surest way to solve the retention issues is to go directly to the source to find out on an ongoing basis why the teachers leave, where they see the problems and where they see the successes (Miller, Brownwell, & Smith, 1999).
While there has been a shortage of fully certified special education teachers in the United States for at least two decades, it is only recently that this shortage has received significant attention from policymakers at the national level. This has occurred at least in part as a result of the mandate in the Federal Act known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (U. S. Department of Education, 2002) that all content area teachers in Title I schools be "highly qualified" by the 2005-2006 school year. This mandate was built upon the belief among policymakers and researchers that highly qualified teachers significantly increase student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). For example, Sanders and Horn found that the quality of the teacher contributes more to student achievement than any other factor, including student background, class size, or class composition.

Although the NCLB mandate does not apply to most special education teachers, it is widely assumed that the imminent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will include a "highly qualified" mandate that mirrors the intent of NCLB.

Statement of the Problem

The lack of qualified special education teachers threatens the quality of education that students with disabilities receive. Attrition plays a part in the teacher shortage problem, and efforts to improve retention must be informed by an understanding of the factors that contribute to attrition. One of the most important challenges in the field of special education is developing a qualified workforce and creating work environments
that sustain special educators' involvement and commitment. (Smith-Davis, Burke, & Noel, 2004).

The supply and demand for special educators are influenced by varied and complex factors. McLeskey, Tyler, and Flippin (2003), provide a comprehensive analysis of the broad range of factors that influence the special education teacher shortage. However, even a comprehensive analysis of available data may not fully illustrate the extent of the teacher shortage problem in special education. School districts may reduce services to students with disabilities or raise class size limits to cope with the lack of qualified teachers (Billingsley, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 2006). The shortage problem has serious and far-reaching implications for students with disabilities. The consequences of the shortage include inadequate educational experiences for students, reduced student achievement levels, and insufficient competence of graduates in the workplace (Darling-Hanunond & Sclan, 2006).

In 2005, 155 of metropolitan Atlanta district general education teachers left the district. While in 2006, the number of general education teachers leaving the district plummeted nearly 19% to 126. The surge in teachers staying on the job was even more profound in the early career years. In the past districts across Atlanta has battled to keep teachers on the job. But in 2006, the number of teachers with zero to five years experience who left their jobs dropped dramatically, by 25% to 576 teachers. These numbers compared to special education teacher that left were more than doubled for school year 2005 and 2006. Compared to general education for the metro Atlanta district, special education teachers left the district in droves. In 2005, 232 special education
teachers left the district. The year 2006 brought drastic change to the metro Atlanta district with 333 teachers not renewing their contract to return to the district. These numbers are astounding contributing to attrition for general education as well as special education. The attrition rates leave the district seeking certified teachers to fill positions of teachers that did not renew contracts as well as filling positions due to the growth of the district and meeting the growing needs of the students.

Although the causes of the shortage problem are complex, teacher attrition is clearly a major contributor. Recent evidence suggests that special education, math, and science are the fields with the highest turnover and that special education teachers are more likely to depart than any other teacher group (Ingersoll, 2001). McLeskey et al. (2003) provide an analysis of the research on special education attrition rates and suggest that a greater proportion of special educators than general educators leave. As Ingersoll observed, the shortage will not be solved by recruiting thousands of new people into teaching if many leave after a few short years. There are different types of attrition (e.g., leaving the teaching profession, transferring to other teaching and educational positions). It is of interest that the field of special education loses many teachers to general education, with a significantly higher proportion of special educators transferring to general education than the reverse (Boe, Cook, Bobbitt, & Weber, 1998). Schnorr (1995) reported that of teachers who plan to leave special education, 12% want to transfer to general education. General education teaching is obviously a draw for many special educators, while others leave to escape what they view to be the poor work conditions in special education (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). Efforts to reduce attrition should be based
on an understanding of factors that contribute to special educators' decisions to leave the field.

*Organization of Special Education*

A major concern in the field of special education is the effective delivery of services and their administrative organization. A conceptual definition for “organization” as it applies to special education is developed. Specific areas in special education organization that warrant research are identified and described. Examples include: (a) the need to determine the extent to which organization facilitates or hampers the achievement of stated objectives; (b) the need to determine the impact of coordination of research, teaching, and service delivery upon the effectiveness of special education programs; (c) the impact of the functions of recruiting, employing, training, and evaluating special education personnel on the effectiveness of service delivery; (d) factors in group relationships that influence interpretation and implementation of formal administrative policy in special education; and (e) methods for best utilizing and developing the informal relationships of the school. Finally, methods that can be utilized in planning and conducting such research are examined. Some of the difficulties encountered in designing and conducting research on problems in administrative organization are outlined.

The organization of special education within a district is in many cases top heavy and very little collaboration takes place. Special education teachers are evaluated by program assistants as well as the principal of the school. The program assistant is evaluated by coordinators of the specified level in which they teach, as well as the
principal. The coordinators of each level are evaluated and receive directives from the
director of special education and or executive directors and the executive directors are
evaluated by the superintendent of schools (see Figure 1). All are expected to work
collaboratively for the success special education.

Purpose of the Study

Despite the current trend toward school based decision making, many schools
remain bureaucratic organizations where teachers have little control over major decisions
in their environments and frequently work in isolation. Furthermore, with increasing
demands to be accountable, teachers’ work is becoming more intense, leaving many
teachers feeling emotionally exhausted; thus in the school bureaucracies, teachers may
become stressed by the role overload and lack of autonomy. While many areas in
education are experiencing shortages, the retention of special education teachers in
particular, is a critical concern in many schools across the nation. Even prior to the
developing national teacher shortage, educators voicing concerns about higher burnout
and/or teacher attrition rates in special education as compared to general education
(National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1990). Many anticipate
that the national teacher shortage may only exacerbate this growing need for special
educators. McNabb (2002), for example estimated the annual attrition rate for special
education teachers as between 9% and 10%, as compared to 6% among teachers in other
areas. A survey of over 1,000 special educators conducted by the Council for
Exceptional Children (CEC) concluded: “Poor teacher working conditions contribute to
the high rate of special educators leaving the field, teacher burnout, and substandard
Figure 1. Organizational Chart of Special Education
quality of education for students with special needs” (CEC, 1998, p. 77). Clearly hidden within the growing national teacher shortage in all certification areas, the ongoing burnout of special education teachers has become an important liability in the provision of appropriate educational services to students with disabilities. The purpose of this study is to determine what factors are influencing teachers to leave the profession of teaching as a special educator. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to determine how the factors influence special education teacher retention.

Research Questions

Meeting the daily learning and behavioral needs of students makes teaching a stressful job. Although not all stress associated with teaching is negative, stress that reduces a teacher’s motivation can have deleterious effects such as alienation from the workplace, absenteeism, and attrition. In fact, when special education teachers are highly stressed by the unmanageability of their workload, they are more likely to leave the special education classroom (Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). This research takes an in-depth look at some contributing factors to the exploding rate of special education teacher attrition. The research questions for the study are:

RQ1: What factors influence special education teachers to leave the profession of teaching?

RQ2: How do these factors impact the retention of special education teachers?

RQ3: Why are these factors influencing the retention of special education teachers?
Significance of the Study

Nationwide, some 2.4 million teachers will be needed in the next 11 years because of teacher attrition and retirement and increased student enrollment. Teacher shortages are not new. Periodically, throughout the past half century, there have been fewer teachers available than were needed, and policy makers at the state and federal levels have responded by stepping up recruitment efforts and issuing temporary teaching credentials to those without qualifications. Three things are new; however, the requirement that teachers in all schools be “highly qualified,” the realization that it is not so much teacher recruitment that is the problem in staffing the nation's K-12 schools but teacher retention; and growing evidence that, similar to every other problem that plagues the nation's schools, the problem of teacher retention is indefinitely here to stay.

The significance of this study is to inform district leaders the factors that are influencing special education attrition and what changes might be implemented to deter teachers.

The findings of this study could serve as an indicator in the following ways:

1. This study could identify factors that are influencing certified special educators to leave.

2. This study could inform personnel staff of incentives or services that might increase retention.

3. This study could inform school advisors of the significance and need of certified highly qualified special educators.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The relationship of teacher characteristics to attrition has been studied fairly extensively in the last two decades in general education attrition research but has received less attention in special education studies (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). Billingsley (2003) provided a four-category schematic representation of special education teacher retention, transfer, and attrition. In the first category, retention pertained to teachers who remained in the same teaching assignment and the same school as the previous year. The second category, “transfers to another special education teaching position,” included those who stayed in special education teaching but transferred to another position (in either the same or a different district). The third category, “transfers to general education teaching,” was of concern because this group reflected a loss to the special education teaching force (Billingsley, 2003). The fourth group, “exit attrition,” included those who left teaching altogether—that is, retired, returned to school, stayed home with young children, or took nonteaching positions in education (e.g., counseling, administration). According to Boe, Cook, Kaufman, and Danielson (2006), “The most troublesome component of turnover is exit attrition, because it represents a reduction in the teaching force, requiring a compensating inflow of replacement teachers” (p. 421). Researchers often combine more than one type of attrition in a given study. This study lends itself to the current research
as it pertains to the factors that influence special education teacher retention and its definition for this study.

The above framework relates to what teachers actually do (i.e., stay, transfer, or exit). Other researchers have tracked special educators who left their positions determining the extent to which teachers exit and rearrange themselves in the workforce requires careful follow-up study that is difficult, time-consuming, and costly—an obvious drawback to studying teacher attrition. Therefore, some researchers have not studied teachers' career behaviors; instead, they examine existing populations of current teachers to determine their intent to leave as a proxy for attrition (Whitaker, 2000). The study of intent allows investigators to consider the relationship of teachers' career plans to a range of district and teacher variables, without the expensive and time-consuming task of finding those who left.

Two conceptual models provide a description of the wide range of factors that influence special educators' career decisions. Billingsley's (2003) schematic representation included three broad categories: external factors, employment factors, and personal factors. External factors (economic, societal, and institutional) are external to the teacher and the employing district and are hypothesized to have primarily an indirect effect on teachers' career decisions. This model focuses on employment factors (professional qualifications; work conditions and rewards; and commitments to school, district, teaching field, and teaching profession). Billingsley hypothesized that when "professional qualifications and work conditions are not as favorable, teachers are likely to experience fewer rewards and, thus, reduced commitment. Whether teachers actually
leave depends on a host of personal, social, and economic factors” (p. 147). Personal factors include variables outside of the employment arena that may directly or indirectly influence career decisions, such as life circumstances and priorities. The second model, proposed by Brownell and Smith (2004), is an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's model that incorporates four nested, interrelated systems: the micro system (the teacher's immediate setting and the interactions that occur as a result of student and teacher characteristics), the mesosystem (interrelations among several variables in the workplace, such as collegiality and administrative support), the exosystem (formal and informal social structures, including the socioeconomic level of a community), and the macrosystem (cultural beliefs and ideologies of the dominant culture, as well as economic conditions that affect schools and teachers' career decisions).

In the review as proposed by Boe and Bobitt (2006), a thematic synthesis of findings is provided, including (a) teacher characteristics and personal factors, (b) teacher qualifications, (c) work environment factors, and (d) affective reactions to work. During the last 10 years, the study of work-related factors has been central in special education attrition and retention research; therefore, Brownell and Smith’s (2004) review focuses heavily on these factors. Given that external factors were not directly addressed in recent studies, this area is not reviewed.

Boe and Bobitt (2006) did not necessarily propose the framework for designing and interpreting attrition/retention research as a causal model to be tested. They expected that variable relationships would be complex and reciprocal and that some variables would correlate more highly with attrition than others.
Personal Factors

Personal Factors include variables outside of the employment arena that may directly or indirectly influence career decisions, such as life circumstances and priorities. As forestated, the second model proposed by Brownell and Smith (1993) is an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner’s model that incorporates four nested, interrelated systems. These systems include the microsystem (teacher’s immediate setting and interactions that occur as a result of student and teacher characteristics), the mesosystem (interrelations among several variables in the work place, e.g., collegiality and administrative support), the exosystem (formal and informal social structures, e.g., socioeconomic level of community, nature of district), and the macrosystem (cultural beliefs and ideologies of the dominant culture as well as economic conditions that impact schools and teachers' career decisions). Brownell and Smith propose a framework for designing and interpreting attrition/retention research, but not necessarily as a causal model to be tested. They expect that variable relationships may be complex and reciprocal and that some variables may correlate more highly with attrition than others. Both frameworks identify variables that may be related to attrition and propose relationships between the variables.

During the last ten years, the study of work-related factors has been central in special education attrition and retention research; therefore, this review focuses heavily on these factors. Given that external factors were not directly addressed in recent studies, this area is not reviewed (see Billingsley, 1993 and Brownell & Smith, 1992 for a discussion of these factors).
Age

Age is the only demographic variable that is consistently linked to attrition in the special education literature. Researchers consistently show that younger special educators are more likely to leave (or express intent to leave) than older special educators (Zabel & Zabel, 2003). Researchers have found that young special education teachers leave at rates nearly twice that of mature teachers. Earlier, Grissmer and Kirby (1987) showed that teacher attrition patterns for both general and special educators followed a U-shaped curve. Attrition is high among younger teachers, low for teachers during the mid-career period, and high again as teachers retire. However, Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Weber, et al. (2005) report that age functions differently for leavers (those who exit public school teaching) than movers (those who changed positions). They show that leavers show the characteristic U-function with age, whereas the percentage of movers declines systematically with increasing age. Boe and colleagues found this relationship holds for both general and special educators. Billingsley and McLeskey (2005) reported that younger special educators were more likely to transfer than older teachers; however, this finding did not hold for leavers. Teachers with less experience are more likely to leave (Billingsley & McLesky, 2005) and also indicate intent to leave more often than their more experienced counterparts. This is to be expected, because age and teaching experience are highly correlated. However, many people now begin teaching when they are older, often as a second career, so age should be controlled while examining experience.
Age impacts supply and demand as well as teacher retention. Because attrition rates are sensitive to teacher characteristics, "teacher career persistence may change as the composition of the teaching force changes" (Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1988, p. 22). As Singer (1993a) points out, there is a possibility that "future attrition rates computed across all special educators may drop as older teachers comprise a larger fraction of the new teaching force and as special educators hired in response to EHA reach the stable years of mid-career" (p. 274-275). The reasons for higher attrition among younger teachers have been discussed fairly extensively in the literature. While some new teachers find the job of teaching satisfying, others encounter frustrations and initial difficulties that discourage them from continuing in their positions (Billingsley & McLesky, 2005). Billingsley and McLeskey also point out that younger teachers have fewer debt obligations and are less invested in a specific occupation or location. Experienced teachers who leave also face retraining costs, as well as the loss of tenure and an experienced teacher's salary (Singer, 1993a). Age-related factors also include lifestyle cycle stages (e.g., child-rearing, retirement) as well as personal needs and preferences.

The relationship between gender and attrition has been included in only a few special education studies, and the findings are mixed. Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Weber, et al. (2005) did not find a relationship between gender and attrition for a national sample of general or special educators. Moreover no relationship between gender and turnover was found in state studies of attrition behavior and intent (Miller et al., 1999). However, in a study of urban special educators, Morvant, Gersten, Gillman, Keating, and Blake (1995)
found that male teachers are more likely to leave than the female gender. Two conceptual models provide a broad understanding of factors that influence special education attrition and retention. Both models as presented by the Researcher provide a description of the wide range of factors that influence special educators' career decisions. Billingsley's (1993) schematic is a representation of the range of influences on teachers' career decisions, including external factors, employment factors, and personal factors. External factors (economic, societal, institutional), which are external to the teacher and employing district, have an indirect effect on teachers' career decisions. The center of this model focuses on employment factors (professional qualifications, work conditions and rewards, and commitments to school, district, teaching field and teaching profession). Billingsley (1993) hypothesizes that when professional qualifications and work conditions are not as favorable, teachers are likely to experience fewer rewards and, thus, reduced commitment. Whether teachers actually leave depends on a host of personal, social, and economic factors.

Gender

Singer (1993a) found that young female special educators leave the classroom at a higher rate and return at the same rate as their male counterparts. Inconsistent findings may be due to differences in the methods and samples used as well as changes in the workforce over time. For example, Singer's (1993a) data were from a database covering 1972 to 1983, while the more recent findings (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, et al., 1997; Miller et al., 1999) reflect teachers over a decade later. As Darling-Hammond and Sclan
(1996) point out, in the previous era, younger women were more likely to leave than men or older women. Women’s labor force participation patterns now more closely resemble men’s.

**Race**

No differences in attrition behavior were found between teachers of different races in a recent national study of special educators (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Weber, et al., 2005), as well as studies in Florida (Miller et al., 1999), North Carolina and Michigan (Singer, 1993a). In Virginia, Cross and Billingsley (1994) found that whites were more likely to stay but their study focused on intent, not actual behavior. In one study of special educators working in an urban system, a higher proportion of European American teachers left than African-American teachers (Billingsley et al., 2005).

Personal finances and perceived opportunities may influence whether teachers stay or leave. Special educators who were primary “breadwinners” were more likely to stay than those who were not (Westling & Whitten, 1996). However, Billingsley and Cross (1992) did not find any differences between “breadwinner” status and intent to stay or leave. Special educators perceiving the likelihood of finding nonteaching positions plan to teach for shorter periods than those perceiving fewer nonteaching opportunities. Cross and Billingsley (2003) suggest that teachers who had higher levels of education, less experience, and belonged to a minority group were more likely to intend to leave because of better career alternatives outside of education. In several qualitative studies, teachers indicate that personal reasons unrelated to work contributed to their decisions to leave (McKlesky & Saunders, 2002). In a study of 99 teachers who exited an urban
school system, Billingsley et al. (1995) found that 37% of the special educators compared to 53% of general educators, left primarily for personal reasons, e.g., family or person move, pregnancy/child-rearing, health, retirements. Personal reasons were usually given as first reasons for leaving and appear to be “pivotal” in decisions to leave.

Teacher qualifications have received less attention in the special education attrition literature than any other area. Most of the special education attrition studies include relatively easy to obtain measures that are sometimes assumed to be basic indices of quality (e.g., certification status, degrees earned, performance on tests, and experience). Because it is difficult to find consensus on what teacher “quality” means (Blanton et al., 2002), the selection of any measure will likely be controversial. Variables (e.g., the nature of pre-service experiences, student teaching, and teacher skill or efficacy) have rarely been addressed in the majority of special education attrition reports.

Professional Factors

Teacher Certification

There is some evidence that links certification status to special education teacher attrition. In a study of over 1,000 Florida special educators, Boe and Bobbitt (2006) reported a higher level of attrition among uncertified teachers than certified teachers. In their logit analyses, Miller and colleagues found that certification is a predictor for exit, but not transfer attrition. In Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, and Maislin (1999), being uncertified was associated with a higher level of transfer. Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Weber, et al. (2005) reported that higher levels of turnover were associated with teachers who are not fully certified in their main assignment when general and special educator samples
were combined, but not for general and special education samples separately. (This may be due to an inadequate sample size of special educators). Certification has also been linked with intent to leave. Carlson and Billingsley (2001) reported that uncertified special educators were more likely to indicate plans to leave as soon as possible than their certified counterparts. Because two large-scale studies (Miller et al., 1999; Carlson & Billingsley, 2001) found a relationship between lack of certification and higher levels of attrition, special education teachers on provisional or emergency certificates should be considered at high risk of leaving and in particular need of support.

Few studies address the relationship of attrition to academic ability, degrees earned, or the quality of teacher preparation, so few conclusions can be drawn. Most likely, the strongest link is between attrition and performance on standardized tests. For example, Singer (1993a) found that teachers with higher National Teacher Exam scores were twice as likely to leave than those with lower scores. Similarly, Frank and Keith (1984) found that special educators who were more academically able (as measured by the Scholastic Aptitude Test [SAT]) were more likely to leave teaching than those with lower academic performances. Although these measures are not indicators of teaching competence, it is of concern that teachers with higher tested ability are leaving the field. None of the attrition studies relate level of academic degrees to leaving, moving, or exiting. However, in two studies of intent to leave, those with more training were more likely to indicate they intended to leave. Cross and Billingsley (2003) state that those teachers with higher degrees perceive greater employability in nonteaching positions and therefore are more likely to leave. Some studies include variables such as perceived
preparedness (George, George, Gersten, & Groenick, 1995; Miller et al., 1999), ranking of own abilities (Westling & Whitten, 1996), ratings of competence (George et al., 1995), and self-efficacy (Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Lenk, 1994, 1995; Miller et al., 1999).

However, neither perceived preparedness nor self rankings have been related to attrition and retention. In a study of Florida teachers, Miller et al. (1999) did not find that self-efficacy was significantly related to teacher attrition. Although no relationship was found between attrition and teacher quality, it is possible that the measures used in some of these studies may not be adequate to detect differences. Findings in three studies of attrition behavior among special educators, salary should be a strategy that school systems consider to increase retention. However, there are equity implications. As Henke, Choy, Chen, Geis, and Air (1997) point out, districts and schools that cannot offer competitive salaries are likely to be at a serious disadvantage when it comes to hiring and retaining teachers. It is interesting to note that over half of the nation’s large districts use financial incentives, such as cash bonuses or placement on a higher step of the salary schedule, as a recruitment strategy (Carlson & Billingsley, 2001). These bonuses help attract teachers, but the effects of these bonuses on the retention of teachers beyond the negotiated period remains a question.

One of the broadest work environment variables included in the special education attrition literature is school climate. Two large-scale studies (Miller et al., 1999) suggest that teachers who rate school climate positively are more likely to stay than those who have less positive views of school climate. Although both found climate important to
retention, they measure climate differently. Miller and colleagues define school climate in a three-item scale (e.g., “the morale of the staff in my current school is good”).

School climate is measured by a scale that includes a range of items such as:

- school administrative behavior is supportive and encouraging;
- necessary materials are available when you need them;
- most of your colleagues share your beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be;
- there is a great deal of cooperation among staff members
- this school is a safe place for students;
- you feel included in the school. (p. 207)

School climate is clearly linked to attrition and the Miller et al. (1999) study looked at actual leavers. These two studies suggest that when teachers have overall positive feelings about the climate of their schools, they are more likely to stay in teaching. Many attrition researchers attempt to separate various work-related influences; this is difficult because these influences are inextricably linked. The climate variable is important, in essence, researchers are asking, “Overall, is your school/district a good place to work?”

**Administrative Support**

Research suggests that teachers are more likely to leave teaching or indicate intent to leave without adequate support from administrators and colleagues. In a national study, Boe and Bobitt (2006) reported that teachers who stay in their positions are almost four times more likely to strongly perceive administrators’ behavior as supportive and encouraging than leavers. Miller et al. (1999) also found that perceived support from
building administrators was significantly related to attrition behavior. Research on intent supports these findings. George et al. (1995) found that when teachers of students with emotional disorders perceive supervisory support as "adequate" or "more than adequate," there is a greater likelihood that they plan to remain in the field. Special and general educators who report higher levels of principal support are more likely to be less stressed, more satisfied with their jobs, and more committed to their employing school divisions than those receiving less support (Billingsley & Cross, 2002). Westling and Whitten (1996) found that teachers who plan to stay are more likely than leavers to indicate that they receive support from school administrators for inclusion, program enhancement, students taught, and problem solving. In a study of incentives to teach in special education, Schnorr (1995) reports that the top-rated incentive (88%) was a supportive principal. The relationship between central office administration and attrition are mixed. In a study of intent to leave, Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss, M. K. (2001) found that central office administrators exert an indirect influence on attrition through professional development opportunities and stress (Gersten et al., 2001). However, Miller et al. (1999) did not find a relationship between principal support and attrition in their study of attrition behavior. It is likely that the different dependent measures may have influenced these differences or the different analyses employed. In a study of urban teachers, special educators indicate dissatisfaction with central office administrators as frequently or more frequently than with principals (Billingsley et al., 1995). Billingsley et al. state that 25% of those who left teaching in an urban setting identify dissatisfaction with support from central administration and 20% indicate that dissatisfaction with
principal support influenced their decision to leave. In contrast, general educators were less likely to report dissatisfaction with support from central administrators (10%) and principals (12%). The finding that central office administrators play a critical role in the lives of special educators is not surprising, given that district administrators usually have a key role in determining special education policies, regulating IDEA requirements, and identifying and placing students with disabilities. Recent path analyses provide a better understanding of how administrative support influences intent to leave, through other important mediating variables (e.g., job satisfaction, stress, and commitment). More specifically, in all three path studies, a higher level of support from principals is directly or indirectly associated with more professional development opportunities (Gersten et al., 2001), fewer role problems, greater job satisfaction, reduced stress, and higher levels of commitment (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). (Gersten et al. included both principals and teachers in their support variable.)

Defining support is difficult, because it must be comprehensive in nature and varied in type (Gold, 1996). In this sense, support is a global construct that has many dimensions. Littrell, Billingsley, and Cross (1994) found that emotional support (e.g., showing appreciation, taking an interest in teachers’ work, maintaining open communication) is perceived as most important to special educators. They also found that emotional and instructional support (providing needed materials, space, and resources) correlate positively with both job satisfaction and school commitment. The fact that Littrell and colleagues did not find a significant relationship between administrative support and intent to leave is consistent with the path analysis studies
described above. Administrative support likely influences attrition through other key mediating variables (e.g., role problems, stress, job satisfaction, commitment, and professional development).

In conclusion, many analysts argue that current school staffing problems are caused as much by teacher attrition as by the failure to attract new teachers. Indeed, research has shown that approximately one-quarter of all beginning teachers leave teaching within four years (Benner, 2000). In general, teachers list family or personal reasons, such as pregnancy, the demands of child rearing, and health problems as reasons for leaving the profession. Job dissatisfaction, primarily due to poor salary, poor administrative support, and student discipline problems, is also among the most frequent reasons teachers give for leaving the profession (Tye & O’Brien 2002; Ingersoll, 2001; MacDonald 1999).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Paradigm

Qualitative case study research places emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions and records. The traditional or quantitative approach to research looks past these words, actions and records to their mathematical significance (Yin, 2002). The traditional approach to research (quantifies) the results of these observations. In contrast qualitative case study research examines the patterns of meaning which emerge from the data and these are often presented in the participants' own words. The task of the qualitative researcher is to find patterns within those words (and actions) and to present those patterns for others to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research is a field of inquiry that crosscuts disciplines and subject matters. It involves an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern human behavior. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on reasons behind various aspects of behavior. Simply put, it investigates the why and how of decision making, as compared to what, where, and when of quantitative research (Yin, 2002). Hence, the need is for smaller but focused samples rather than large random samples, which qualitative case study research categorizes data into patterns as the primary basis for organizing and reporting results (Yin, 2002). Qualitative researchers
typically rely on four methods for gathering information: (a) participation in the setting, (b) direct observation, (c) in depth interviews, and (d) analysis of documents and materials.

This research will be classified as qualitative case study analysis. The case study is one of several ways of doing research. Other ways include experiments, surveys, multiple histories, and analysis of archival information. Rather than using large samples and following a rigid protocol to examine a limited number of variables, case study methods involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event: a case. They provide a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results. As a result the researcher may gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did, and what might become important to look at more extensively in future research. Case studies lend themselves to both generating and testing hypotheses (Yin, 2002).

Another suggestion is that case study should be defined as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Case study research means single and multiple case studies, can include quantitative evidence, relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions (Yin, 2002). Case studies should not be confused with qualitative case study research and they can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Single-subject research provides the statistical framework for making inferences from quantitative case-study data. This is also supported and well-formulated in Lamnek
The case study is a research approach, situated between concrete data taking techniques and methodological paradigms.

The goal of qualitative case study research is to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic. What can be discovered by qualitative case study is not sweeping generalizations but contextual findings. This process of discovery is basic to the philosophic underpinning of the qualitative approach (Merriam, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

The researcher approached this study applying a theoretical framework which included administrative policy, administrative practice, and the federal guidelines for the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Based on the attrition theory that will undergird this study, the researcher believes that attrition is influenced by many factors. As shown in Figure 2, the researcher believes that the relationship between attrition and external factors (i.e., age, gender, and race); as well as internal factors (i.e., administrative support and the mandates of the NCLB mandates, and effective leadership) may have on special educator’s decision to leave the profession. Several studies have also documented the importance that personal circumstances play in some decisions to leave.

*NCLB “Highly Qualified” Definition*

Federal law requires that all special education teachers, including special education teachers in Title I and non-Title I schools, be “highly qualified” on or before August 31, 2006 just as all other teachers of core academic content subjects. NCLB
“highly qualified” teacher requirements refer specifically to the qualifications and certification of teachers who are assigned to teach core academic content courses. Certified special education teachers are highly qualified to offer expertise in teaching students with disabilities and to provide opportunities for those students to be successful academically in inclusive classroom settings or in pull-out, resource delivery models. Although highly qualified in the area of special education, IDEA and NCLB now require that all teachers, including special education teachers, provide evidence that they are highly qualified and
certified in the content subjects that they teach. Core academic concentrations in reading, language arts, math, science, and/or social studies must be listed on the special education teacher’s teaching certificate in order for the teacher to serve as the teacher of record for any of these subjects. Special education teachers may meet the highly qualified requirements by meeting the certification requirements to teach the core academic subjects at the required cognitive level and by being assigned to teach the content area listed on their certificate. Core concentration areas are acquired by (a) having a combination of college course work and/or professional learning units (PLUs) totaling 15 semester hours (5 quarter hours or 5 PLUs = 3 semester hours), OR (b) a major in the content area, OR (c) passing the appropriate PRAXIS II ECE fundamental subjects: Content Knowledge Test or individual Middle Grades or Secondary Subject Tests, OR (d) obtaining, at a minimum, 100 points on the Special Education High Objective Uniform State Standard Evaluation [HOUSSE] (veteran teachers only). Core concentrations at the secondary cognitive level are acquired by (a) having a major or 21 semester hours and/or PLUs (3 semester hours = 5 PLUs), OR (b) passing the appropriate Praxis II subject test(s), OR (c) obtaining, at a minimum, 100 points on the HOUSSE rubric (veteran teachers only). Special education teachers are not required to meet highly qualified requirements if they are not providing core academic content instruction as the teacher of record. However, all students enrolled in grades K–12 must be provided core academic content instruction by either a special education teacher or one who is certified in the content area.
Definitions

Administrative Support

Research suggests that teachers are more likely to leave teaching or indicate intent to leave in the absence of adequate support from administrators and colleagues. In a national study, Boe, Barkanic, and Leow (1999) reported that teachers who stayed in their positions were almost four times more likely to strongly perceive administrators' behavior as supportive and encouraging than leavers. Miller et al. (1999) also found that perceived support from building administrators was significantly related to attrition behavior. Research on intent supports these findings. George, George, Gersten, and Grosenick (1995) found that when teachers of students with emotional disorders perceived supervisory support as "adequate" or "more than adequate," there was a greater likelihood that they planned to remain in the field. Special and general educators who reported higher levels of principal support were less likely to be stressed and more likely to be committed to and satisfied with their jobs than those receiving less support (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Westling and Whitten (1996) found that teachers who planned to stay are more likely than leavers to indicate that they received support from school administrators for inclusion, program enhancement, and problem solving. In a study of incentives to teach in special education, Schnorr (1995) reported that the top-rated incentive was a supportive principal (88%). Findings on the relationship between central office administration and attrition are mixed. In a study of intent to leave, Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001) found that central office administrators exerted an indirect influence on attrition via professional development opportunities and
stress related to role design (Gersten et al., 2001). However, Miller et al. (1999) did not find a relationship between principal support and attrition. It is likely that the different dependent measures or different analyses employed may have influenced these differences.

Defining support is difficult, because it must be comprehensive in nature and varied in type (Gold, 2006). In this sense, support is a global construct that has many dimensions. For the purpose of this research, the researcher agrees with Littrell and colleagues (2004) in that administrative support may be defined as emotional support (e.g., showing appreciation, taking an interest in teachers’ work, maintaining open communication) is perceived as most important to special educators. In addition, that emotional and instructional support (providing needed materials, space, and resources) correlate positively with both job satisfaction and school commitment.

Administrative support likely influences retention through other key mediating variables (e.g., role problems, stress, job satisfaction, commitment, and professional development). Furthermore, administrative support influences retention in terms of school administrative behavior is supportive and encouraging (i.e., necessary materials are available when you need them, Administrators attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings when invites, and a feeling of being included in the school.)

Retention

For the purpose of this research retention may be defined as “teachers that remain in the same teaching assignment and the same school as the previous year. Retention may also be defined as teachers that will not transfer to another special education
teaching position, and includes those who stay in special education teaching but transfer to another position (either in the same or a different district). For the purpose of this research, teachers that transfer to general education teaching are referred to as teachers that have left the teaching profession as a special education teacher because this group reflects a loss to the special education teaching force.

Furthermore, teachers that will retire, return to school, stay home with young children, or take nonteaching positions in education are referred to as leaving the special education teaching profession as this group proves to be the most troublesome component of turnover is exit attrition, because it represents a reduction in the teaching force, requiring a compensating inflow of replacement teachers. This may be one reason that the majority of special education researchers do not actually study special education teachers’ career behaviors; instead, they examine existing populations of current teachers to determine their intent to leave as a proxy for attrition (Whitaker, 2000).

Personal Factors

Age

Age is the only demographic variable that is consistently linked to attrition in the special education literature. Researchers consistently show that younger special educators are more likely to leave (or express intent to leave) than older special educators (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, et al., 1997; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Morvant et al., 1995; Singer, 1992). Singer found that young special education teachers leave at a rate nearly twice that of mature teachers. Earlier, Grissmer and Kirby (1987) showed that teacher attrition patterns for both general and special educators followed a U-shaped curve:
Attrition was high among younger teachers, low for teachers during the mid-career period, and high again as teachers retired. However, Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, et al. (1997) reported that age functioned differently for leavers (those who exit public school teaching) than movers (those who change positions). They found that leavers showed the characteristic U-function with age, whereas the percentage of movers declined systematically with increasing age. Boe and colleagues found that this relationship held for both general and special educators. Miller et al. (1999) reported that younger special educators were more likely to transfer than older teachers; however, this finding did not hold for leavers. Teachers with less experience are more likely to leave (Miller et al., 1999) and also indicate intent to leave more often than their more experienced counterparts (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Morvant et al., 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). This is to be expected, because age and teaching experience are highly correlated. However, many people now begin teaching when they are older, often as a second career, so age should be controlled while examining experience. Age affects supply and demand as well as teacher retention. Because attrition rates are sensitive to teacher characteristics, "teacher's career persistence may change as the composition of the teaching force changes" (Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1988, p. 22). As Singer (1992) pointed out, there is a "possibility that future attrition rates computed across all special educators may drop as older teachers comprise a larger fraction of the new teaching force and as special educators hired in response to EHA reach the stable years of mid-career" (p. 274-275).
The reasons for higher attrition among younger teachers have been discussed fairly extensively in the literature. While some new teachers find the job of teaching satisfying, others encounter frustrations and initial difficulties that discourage them from continuing in their positions (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Heyns, 1988; Singer, 1992). Grissmer and Kirby also pointed out that younger teachers have fewer debt obligations and are less invested in a specific occupation or location. Experienced teachers who leave face retraining costs, as well as the loss of tenure and an experienced teacher's salary (Singer, 1992).

**Gender**

Some younger teachers also leave because of family responsibilities, such as decisions to stay home with children. The relationship between gender and attrition has been included in only a few special education studies, and findings have been mixed. Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, et al. (1997) did not find a relationship between gender and attrition for a national sample of general and special educators. Moreover, no relationship between gender and turnover was found in state studies of attrition (Miller et al., 1999) and intent to leave (Cross & Billingsley, 1994). However, in a study of urban special educators, Morvant et al. (1995) found that male teachers were more likely to indicate intention to leave. Singer (1992) found that young female special educators left the classroom at a higher rate than, and returned at the same rate as, their male counterparts. Inconsistent findings may be due to differences in the methods and samples used, as well as to changes in the workforce over time. For example, Singer's (1992) data were from a database covering 1972 to 1983; the more recent findings (Boe, Bobbitt,
Cook, Whitener, et al., 1997; Miller et al., 1999) reflect teachers of more than a decade later. As Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996) pointed out, in the previous era, younger women were more likely to leave than men or older women. Women's labor-force participation patterns now more closely resemble men's.

**Race**

No differences in attrition behavior were found between teachers of different races in a recent national study of special educators (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, et al., 1997), or in studies in Florida (Miller et al., 1999), North Carolina, and Michigan (Singer, 1992). In Virginia, Cross and Billingsley (1994) found that whites were more likely to stay, but their study focused on intent, not actual behavior. In one study of special educators working in an urban system, a higher proportion of European-American teachers left than African-American teachers (Billingsley et al., 1995). This finding is consistent with Dworkin's (1980) finding that White faculty, particularly women, were more likely to want to quit urban school positions than black or Hispanic faculty.

No Child Left Behind Mandates

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and a related mandate Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have tremendous potential for finally ending the shortage of special education teachers. Indeed, the U.S. Congress is working to align Title II of the Higher Education Act with NCLB, so that states will receive the financial support to address the teacher shortage in the form of loan forgiveness for candidates who plan to teach in shortage areas. If significant funds are available for prospective teachers, this
support will likely attract increasing numbers of teachers into special education and other shortage areas. Although a mandate for highly qualified teachers and related legislation has the potential for increasing the number of certified special education teachers, it also has the potential for exacerbating the teacher shortage. For example, if the content area requirement in NCLB is applied to secondary-level special education teachers, these teachers will be required to hold certification in both special education and the content area they teach (e.g., mathematics, which is also an area of teacher shortages). Although such a mandate would provide increasing assurance that all special education teachers are highly qualified to teach content area subjects, it could also make the shortage of special education teachers worse, unless powerful policy initiatives are enacted to counteract this outcome.

A policy initiative from NCLB emerged in some states (e.g., Florida, Texas) to address the "highly qualified" mandate, as state-level officials became aware of the difficulties to inherent and ensure that all teachers were highly qualified (and thus fully certified) by 2005-2006. Many states offered alternative routes to certification that removed certain requirements or lowered standards for certification. The most extreme of these alternatives was the route that was included in NCLB and promoted by advocates of deregulation of teacher certification (Paige, 2002; Walsh, 2001). This option allowed anyone holding a bachelor's degree to take a test of content and/or pedagogical knowledge and become certified. Thus, these individuals become "highly qualified" without any coursework or field experience in education. Although some evidence is emerging to indicate that student achievement outcomes are lower for
teachers who are prepared by alternate routes that significantly lower requirements for certification (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002), it appears that these routes to certification will be increasingly offered as the deadline for the "highly qualified" mandate approaches. If we are to provide highly qualified teachers for every student with a disability in the United States, it is important to fully understand the nature and scope of the current teacher shortage in special education.

Design of the Study

Qualitative case study research was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand the feelings, values, and perceptions that underlie and influence behavior through the voices of the researcher’s participants. In this particular research, qualitative case study provides an opportunity to identify teacher needs, as they relate to teacher retention and capture the language and imagery teachers use to describe and relate to students, administrators and their jobs as a whole. The results of qualitative case study are descriptive rather than predictive. Several unique aspects of qualitative case study contribute to rich, insightful results. Synergy among respondents, build on each other’s comments and ideas. Qualitative case study research captures the dynamic nature of the interview or group discussion process, which engages respondents more actively than is possible in more structured survey. This particular form of research lends the opportunity to probe ("Help me understand why you feel that way") enabling the researcher to reach beyond initial responses and rationales (Merriam, 2002).

This research method allowed the opportunity to observe, record, and interpret nonverbal communication (i.e., body language, voice intonation) as part of a respondent’s
feedback, which were valuable during interviews or discussions, and during analysis. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity to engage respondents in "play" such as projective techniques and exercises, overcoming the self-consciousness that can inhibit spontaneous reactions and comments.

Participants

Location of Research

Participants for research were selected from a Metro Atlanta local school district through the use of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a non-random method of sampling where the researcher selects information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling (Patton, 2001).

Seven participants were asked by the researcher to participate primarily by the number of years that they’ve been employed as special education teachers, partly due to the fact that research shows that special educators leave the field after five or more years of teaching students with special needs (see Appendix A). Seven participants were asked to participate that had expressed an intent to leave the profession as a special educator (see Appendix B). Five administrators were selected that directly impact special educators performance within the school setting, provide evaluations for teacher performance and provide instructional support for the special educators (i.e., principal, assistant principal, program assistant, and special education liaison) (see Appendix C). Five administrators were selected to participate from the central office staff which may
impact special educator’s decisions to remain (i.e., special education coordinators and special education director) (see Appendix D).

Methods of Data Collection

Most attrition studies involved the use of questionnaires and survey methods to explore the range of variables associated with attrition theory. Researchers analyzed these data from several approaches (Merriam, 1997). One widely used approach in both general and special education studies is to investigate bivariate relationships to determine if a particular variable (e.g., age, gender, salary) is associated with special education attrition. Some of the researchers who investigated bivariate relationships focused primarily on the relationships of a particular class of variables and turnover, such as demographic variables (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987); others focus on a greater number of work and demographic variables (Morvant et al., 1995; Westling & Whitten, 1996). Other researchers use multivariate methods to investigate attrition and retention. Miller et al. (1999) and Westling and Whitten (1996) use logit models to identify significant predictors of attrition. Miller et al. (1999) argue that the multinomial logit analyses identify the variables that have the most direct effect on attrition, thus allowing for more parsimonious models of attrition. Other researchers use path models to test causal relationships among various work-related variables (e.g., support, professional growth, role demands, and commitment) believed to be important to job satisfaction, commitment, and ultimately teacher retention (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Researchers should continue to use multivariate
methods, which can demonstrate the dynamic interactions between important variables and career decisions while controlling for effects of other variables (Creswell, 2002).

Large-scale quantitative case studies of attrition are also needed to investigate the relationships among different factors included in the conceptual models as well as subgroups of teachers. For example, little is known about attrition in rural versus urban systems or attrition among teachers who work with low incidence disabilities versus high incidence disabilities.

The data collection process, for the purpose of this research, is planned extensively and includes several methods to ensure that data is thorough and substantial. The protocol asks open-ended questions so that optimal opportunities for individual perceptions to emerge. The researcher conducted interviews that were conducted on a group basis. The researcher interviewed special education teachers that are certified as highly qualified special educators, and teaching students with special needs within the local school district.

The researcher conducted a group interview session with school administrators (i.e., principals, assistant principals, program assistants, and special education liaison specialist) as well a group interview with Central Office Administrators (coordinators and director of special education) for Exceptional Children departments that oversee the special education programs for the school district (see Table 1).
Table 1

*Research Participants*

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<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Experience</th>
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*Five or More Years of Experience*

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*Intent to Leave*

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<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Experience</th>
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<tr>
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*Building Administration*
Table 1 (continued)

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<td>Administrator #10</td>
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The researcher provided a copy of the Research Consent Form to ensure confidentiality (see Appendix E) and a transcription for member checking and approval. During the study, the researcher kept field notes, and all interviews. This served as a useful tool in noting nuances that cannot be captured audibly, the researcher also received Documentation from the local school district.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of systemically searching and arranging the data that is accumulated to increase the researchers understanding and enable the researcher to present the information that has been discovered to others. More specifically, analysis
involves working with data, organizing the data, and breaking the information into manageable units, synthesizing the information, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and determining what is worthy to tell others (Bigdan & Biklen, 1998). Qualitative data is information gathered in a nonnumeric form. This analysis might include, but is not limited to interview transcript, field notes (notes taken in the field being studied), video, audio recordings, documents (reports, meeting minutes, e-mails). For the purpose of this research study, data analysis is the process of looking at and summarizing data with the intent to extract useful information and develop conclusions (Gibbs, 2002).

Data analysis is the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations we are investigating. Data analysis is usually based on an interpretative philosophy. The idea is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data (Gibbs, 2002). The process of data analysis usually involves two things, writing and the identification of themes. Writing of some kind is found in almost all forms of data analysis. In contrast, some approaches, such as discourse analysis or conversation analysis may not require the identification of themes. Nevertheless, finding themes is part of the overwhelming majority of data analysis for this research study.

Data Coding

The researcher also used data coding as a tool to assist with developing themes and patterns for the data collected. The process of coding and analyzing data is a critical
part of the qualitative case study research process. Most researchers describe the coding process as the unique part that enables the researcher to make an original contribution to the analysis of the data. Coding the data includes taking an in-depth look for things that are pertinent to answering the research question (Agden, 2001). The specificity and concreteness of the research question informs the researcher what information is needed during the coding process. The research question drives the researcher in what information needs to be coded and what to leave for the data analysis process.

Qualitative data coding entails identification of themes contained in specific text passages or segments (Agden, 2001). Themes may include beliefs, experiences, or opinions that the respondent was trying to communicate in response to the interviewers questions. Different respondents may express the similar themes but state their ideas in different ways, or they may hold entirely different views. The qualitative data coding process requires that coders accurately read and comprehend similarities and differences across various text passages, regardless of the way respondents express themselves. Text passages containing identical themes are coded the same way, and passages containing different themes receive different codes (Merriam, 2002).

The coding process included grouping together like or similar responses in an effort to recognize patterns during the interviewing process. The researcher used two major steps to code the data for this qualitative analysis, (a) text segmentation, and (b) the creation and assignment of codes. The text segmentation step entailed dividing the text into manageable segments or "chunks" of text. In addition to text segmentation, the researcher assigned each text that represented a theme a color code for the sake of
organization, which was the creation and assignment of the code for the data (Gibbs, 2002). The creation of the set of codes that were used was an inductive task, based on what the respondents had stated during the interviewing process. The researcher coded answers that were pertaining to administrative support, NCLB mandates and professional development and coded the data for theme and pattern processing by the researcher.

The researcher for this study organized and synthesized data received from documents, observations (interactions participants without verbal interactions), and interviews. The researcher developed analytic questions in order to give focus to the data that is collected and assist with organization during the study. Finally, the researcher synthesized all data to identify patterns that may be present in participant’s responses during interviews. The data were organized through the use of mapping or matrix and the data will be given relevant coding categories. All data were coded to facilitate categorization and analysis.

Data Validity and Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials. Without the agreement of independent observers able to replicate research procedures, or the ability to use research tools and procedures that yield consistent measurements, researchers would be unable to satisfactorily draw conclusions, formulate theories, or make claims about the research. Validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure (Patton, 2001). While reliability is concerned with the accuracy of the actual measuring instrument or procedure, validity is concerned with
the study's success at measuring *what the researchers set out to measure*. Bogdon and Biklen (2003) state that qualitative researchers are concerned with accuracy and comprehensiveness of their data. Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations. The validity and reliability criterion involves establishing that the results of qualitative case study research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative case study research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the Researcher’s eyes, the researcher can legitimately judge the reliability of the results (Boe & Trochim, 2006).

Validity and reliability lends itself to the ability to the transferability of the data as well. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative case study research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalizing. The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. The person who wishes to "transfer" the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer is.

The traditional quantitative view of *reliability* is based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability. Essentially it is concerned with whether we would obtain the same results if we could observe the same thing twice. But we can not actually measure the same thing twice—by definition if we are measuring twice, we are
measuring two different things. In order to estimate reliability, quantitative researchers construct various hypothetical notions (e.g., *true score theory*) to try to get around this fact (Boe & Trochim, 2006). The idea of dependability, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The research is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study.

Finally, qualitative case study research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. Confirmibility also increases the validity and reliability of the data. Confirmibility refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Another researcher can take a "devil's advocate" role with respect to the results, and this process can be documented. The researcher can actively search for and describe and *negative instances* that contradict prior observations. After the study, one can conduct a *data audit* that examines the data collection and analysis procedures and makes judgments about the potential for bias or distortion.

Data Triangulation

Validity and reliability were established by using several methods, first triangulation (field notes, observations, and interviews). Triangulation was used to ensure that the researcher has verified what is believed to be the facts. Triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. This method can be employed in both quantitative (validation) and
qualitative (inquiry) studies. It is a method-appropriate strategy of founding the credibility of qualitative analyses, and is an alternative to traditional criteria like reliability and validity within a qualitative case study research study (Angen, 2000). By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and empirical materials, researchers can hope to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method, single-observer, single-theory studies. As stated by Bogdan and Bilkem (2003), the researcher believes that many sources of data are better than a single source because multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena that is being studied, in this case special education teacher retention.

The researcher incorporated the usage of triangulation into this study by using three methods of data, including observations, interviews and documents. The researcher interviewed the respondents, observed the respondents that were interviewed within their work environment and compiled documents to increase the validity and reliability of the data.

Member Checking

The researcher substantiated validity and reliability by using member checking—when data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained. This can be done both formally and informally as opportunities for member checks may arise during the normal course of observation and conversation. Typically, member checking is viewed as a technique for establishing to the validity of an account. Member checking provides an opportunity to understand and assess what the
participant intended to do through his or her actions, gives participants opportunity to correct errors and challenge what are perceived as wrong interpretations, provides the opportunity to volunteer additional information which may be stimulated by the playing back process and gets respondent on the record with his or her reports. Member checking may also provide an opportunity to summarize preliminary findings, provide respondents the opportunity to assess adequacy of data and preliminary results as well as to confirm particular aspects of the data (Patton, 2001). Furthermore, member checking relies on the assumption that there is a fixed truth of reality that can be accounted for by a researcher and confirmed by a respondent. Although some researchers believe that the process of member-checking may lead to confusion rather than confirmation because participants may change their mind about an issue, the interview itself may have an impact on their original assessment, and new experiences (since the time of contact); respondents may disagree with researcher’s interpretations. Then the question of whose interpretation should stand becomes an issue. Both researchers and members are stakeholders in the research process and have different stories to tell and agendas to promote. This can result in conflicting ways of seeing interpretations. Members struggle with abstract synthesis, members and researchers may have different views of what is a fair account, members strive to be perceived as good people; researchers strive to be seen as good scholars (Angen, 2000). These divergent goals may shape findings and result in different ways of seeing and reacting to data, members may tell stories during an interview that they later regret or see differently. Members may deny such stories and want them removed from the data, but
members may not be in the best position to check the data. Members may forget what they said or the manner in which a story was told; members may participate in checking only to be “good” respondents and agree with an account in order to please the researcher, and different members may have different views of the same data (Creswell, 1998).

As the researcher completed each interview, the process was not deemed complete until all interviews were transcribed and summarized so that all interviewees had the opportunity to check for accuracy. The researcher transcribed all data and allowed each respondent to review the transcribing for correction purposes, if needed, or to perhaps add additional data. The researcher included all corrections as a part of the data collection process. After member checking was completed for each participant the researcher concluded that all data were prepared for data analysis. The researcher took full responsibility for accuracy in all data collected to ensure that the study holds the most integrity and ethical standards as well as ensure reliability and validity.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

After completing all interviews, the observations and reviewing the documentation, the researcher was able to begin the transcribing and member checking process. All data were coded to exhibit commonalities among the interviewees and determine the common emerging themes. The researcher coded all data according to the questions that were asked for each group. Questions that were answered in a similar format or answer form were coded together to exhibit that the interviewees shared the same beliefs as it related to questions that were asked by the researcher.

The researcher began the research by soliciting the participation of teachers that had taught students with special needs for at least five years as certified special educators for an interview. Twenty four participants (special education teachers with five or more years teaching experience, special education teachers expressing an intent to leave the profession, building level administration and Central Office Administration) unanimously agreed to participate and were provided with details as it pertains to the interview and ensured confidentiality (see Appendix E). The researcher stated that the interview would be taped for interviewing purposes and transcribed at a later date. The interview of the twenty four participants was conducted in group form with all respondents and researcher seated in round table format. The respondents were grouped according to which category they were a part of (i.e., Special Education Teacher, Building Level Administration, or
Central Office Administration). Each respondent was given a number by the researcher and asked to audibly speak the number during the interview for transcribing purposes.

Administrative Support

Interviews

The researcher defined as one of the emerging themes of the research results was Administrative support. Respondents for this research all concluded that effective leadership and administrative support go hand and hand as it is relevant to whether they leave or remain as a special education teacher. When asked to describe characteristics of effective leadership, the teachers and administrators alike agreed that “effective leadership” includes Administrators that work to “get results,” referring to student achievement, parent involvement, and teacher satisfaction. The research shows that administrative support includes supporting the staff, providing relevant professional development and being involved in the entire school process. The research shows that being involved in the entire school process may be defined as being present throughout the day. “Effective leaders” have a vision and a mission that all are aware of and are willing to work towards achievement. It was also observed that administrative support or the lack thereof made it extremely difficult to remain as a special educator. For the most part reporting to work everyday was for her students and was getting more and more difficult on a daily basis as the administrator did not support nor understand special education teacher’s needs. Many agreed that administration often ignores special education teachers and students and appears at times to avoid special students at all costs. When asked how administration had exhibited these behaviors a response was provided:
“By not coming to meetings and not recognizing special education in assemblies and faculty meetings.” It was observed that the above stated behavior is very offensive and often makes special education teachers want to seek employment elsewhere, possibly leaving special education altogether. The lack of administrative support also included that special education almost always gets the leftover books, supplies, food and anything else that the school has to offer.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

NCLB was described by special education teachers and administrators to be a devastating factor that has greatly influenced whether teachers remain or leave as special education teachers. The NCLB mandates for highly qualified teacher has impacted many of the decisions to remain as a special educator. Many described that referring to NCLB:

Has been the most difficult aspect of being a special educator. I attended school to become a special educator for five years. It goes without saying that I did not have a desire to teach general education in any content area, or I would have pursued that area of expertise. Nevertheless, I completed school thinking that everything would be great. I’ve taught special education as certified personnel for seven years, first the state mandated that all special educators become interrelated certified, and I did that.

The NCLB requirements although developed in 2002, many Administrators believe it has created a massacre of ill feelings and makes teachers want to walk out and begin a new profession. Teachers stated:
It is very discouraging. We’ve worked hard to get certification and now we have to take all of these test to become ‘highly qualified’ and for what, no one really knows because children aren’t really benefiting from the extra certification. To be honest with you, as soon as I am notified that I have certification in Language Arts, I am leaving special education to go to general education. At least I won’t have IEP’s and I won’t have to worry about them meeting me to death, I will be free.

Respondent #6 shouted, “Do you see what’s happening!” Many have become disgusted with the process to be highly qualified, not only due to the criteria but also because the process is tedious, expensive and difficult to understand. Administrators described losing an insurmountable number of teachers to NCLB requirement. One administrator had to dismiss a phenomenal teacher due to her inability to pass the content area exam to become highly qualified. Many state that having to pay for the exam and bear the stress of passing yet another exam had become too much. The pattern for this theme as observed by the researcher was that NCLB requirements have become more of a liability for teachers whether than an asset, thus increasing the number of teachers that either transfer to general education or leave the profession.

Professional Development

The lack of professional development for teachers and administration was also a theme for this research study. Professional development was a theme that emerged during the interviewing process and was not expected as an independent variable. Many of the teachers believe that professional development could increase the
knowledge base for administration and increase a positive working relationship for special education teachers and Administration. Respondents stated:

They could support us by understanding what we do, attend some type of training to understand special education and what it means to implement IEP's and teach the curriculum all at one time. I'd like to see administration attend difficult meetings to answer concerns of parents and actually stress to general educators how important it is for them to attend scheduled meetings. More than anything, I want administration to treat me like any other teacher in the building. After all I went to school; earned a degree just like everyone else and I believe I deserve the same respect as an educator.

The researcher believes that relevant professional development would assist the administrative staff with issues as described above.

Certification

The researcher did conduct a second interview during the member checking process to determine if the interviewees had other thoughts to add to the research. The researcher asked open-ended questions to determine if certification was a contributing factor in teachers that had expressed an intent to leave the profession of teaching special education. The researcher discovered that three of the five interviewees that were questioned again during this process indeed had contributed the certification process to the reason that they'd decided to leave the profession. The teachers indicated by interview that the certification process had become confusing and difficult to
accomplish. The interviewees added that the certification process included sending information to the local school district, and the local school district sends the information to the Professional Standards Commission. Each teacher explained that this process makes certification difficult as the local school district often takes an unreasonable amount of time to complete the process, the officials within the human resources department often will lose information, thus slowing down the process. The certification process includes but is not limited to providing documentation of professional learning opportunities that have been achieved by teachers that are relevant to the teachers’ field of expertise. The member checking process revealed that certification is a factor that influences the attrition of special education teachers.

Family Support

The researcher found that family was an emerging theme for this study. Building administration as well as special education teachers both describes family being a factor of special education teacher retention. Many special education teachers described that their families (i.e., spouse, parents, siblings, etc.) were not in support of them being a special education teachers. The teachers described to the researcher that many of the special education teacher’s family members thought that teaching had become too time consuming, dangerous (when teaching in the urban school setting) and not offering enough pay. Many of the special education teachers described that their spouses complained that they were not able to contribute financially as much as needed and persuaded them to leave and otherwise seek another profession.
Family was particularly a factor for teachers that had young children. Many of the special education teachers believe that being a special educator took away from the time that they were able to spend with their family due to the many demands of meetings and paperwork. Building administration noted that special education teachers with younger children missed an excessive amount of days from work and later decided that they either could not be effective in their jobs, or were deciding to stay home with their younger children. Building administration added that “teachers with small children and husbands found no need in most instances to continue to work as a special education teacher.” Administration continued by stating, “Most of the teachers that miss work consistently are missing work due to children’s doctor’s appointments, or childcare issues.”

Special education teachers that had expressed intent to leave the profession stated that taking care of an ill family member and taking care of younger children was one of the reasons that they had made the decision to leave the profession as a special education teacher. Of the five special education teachers that had expressed intent to leave the profession, four stated that “among other very important reasons for leaving, taking care of my younger children is one very important reason for leaving.” The researcher concluded that family, either younger children, or ill family members was a factor that was an influence of the attrition of special education teachers.
Researcher Observations and Field Notes

An important part of any qualitative study includes some observations to attribute to the interviewing process. The researcher observed teachers and administration working relations during the research period and was able to make some conclusions based on what was observed.

Administrative Support

The researcher observed that special educators rarely asked administrators for assistance but chose to depend solely on the assistance of one another. Special education teacher almost always were observed talking and congregating with one another and totally segregating themselves from the general education population of students as well as teachers.

It is also noted that administration seemed to have made an effort to ignore special education teachers, as well as students. During faculty meetings, special education teachers were left out during the assigning of teachers to committees and for the duty rosters. This jester alone seemed to have sparked some tension amongst the special education staff members, general education teachers and administration. Although administration was very apologetic, one special education teacher commented “no problem, its common pace.” It was also noted by the researcher that administration rarely knew the names of special education students, unless they were considered behavioral problems, as teachers voiced their concerns about this issue. On one occasion, the researcher observed a special education teacher requesting assistance with a behavior challenge within her class, and it took administration 12 minutes to respond. During the
wait a student was bruised and the teacher became so upset that she left the school for the remainder of the day. On another occasion, the researcher observed a teacher requesting books for her students and being told by the Instruction Liaison, “I’ll give you about five books or so after I distribute them to the other grade level teams.” The researcher appeared to be very disturbed and stated, “My children deserve books too.” It is noted that during the observation the relationship and culture within the observed school were stressful and not positive at all.

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*

The researcher took note of the numerous occasions that special education teachers expressed frustration due to the mandates of NCLB. The researcher noticed during faculty meetings and special education team meetings, many special education teachers expressed a concern to receive more information in regards to certification to meet the NCLB criteria. Respondent #1 and Respondent #3 asked the researcher to assist with the certification process and were noted as stating “this is the very reason I’m leaving, this is too much.” This was the respondents referring to the mandates of NCLB. Special educators reported being confused and not know in what to do to either gain certification for NCLB mandates or certificate renewal. Many special education teachers expressed concerns of having to teach in the collaborative setting due to the fact that they may not be able to gain certification in a content area. The significance of this observation lends itself to the fact that many teachers are frustrated from the mandates of NCLB. The researcher observed a conversation between special educators that were concerned that having to spend one’s own money to take test and apply for teacher.
certification is too much as expressed by the teachers. One teacher stated, “If significant funds are available for prospective teachers, this support will likely attract increasing numbers of teachers into special education and other shortage areas.” From the observation, the researcher believes that although a mandate for highly qualified teachers and related legislation has the potential for increasing the number of certified special education teachers, it also has the potential for exacerbating the teacher shortage. For example, if the content area requirement in NCLB is applied to secondary-level special education teachers, these teachers will be required to hold certification in both special education and the content area they teach (e.g., mathematics, which is also an area of teacher shortages). Although such a mandate would provide increasing assurance that all special education teachers are highly qualified to teach content area subjects, it could also make the shortage of special education teachers worse, unless powerful policy initiatives are enacted to counteract this outcome, which might include incentives to deter teachers from joining the general education force.

Professional Development

The researcher noted that the relationships between teachers of special and general education could be improved with communication and relevant professional development, as well as sensitivity courses for teachers and administration to handle special education issues. The researcher observed that many general educators did not understand the process of participating in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting, and openly expressed frustration throughout the meeting. During the meeting, the general educator is noted by the Researcher as stating, “You all should tell me what to
Special education teacher certification emerges as a common theme during observations, and is noted in the researcher’s field notes for this study. The researcher observes special education teachers during a special certification meeting that is held with the intent to assist special education teachers with the certification process. The meeting is facilitated by Central Office Administration and all special education teachers are required to attend, including teachers that have expressed intent to leave the local school district as special education teachers. The facilitator of the meeting calls each teacher individually to discuss what is needed to obtain certification for the upcoming school term. Several of the teachers that have expressed intent to leave make statements that the meeting does not apply to them stating, “This is one of the reasons that I am outta here; this entire process is totally ridiculous. We shouldn’t have to go through all this to do what we are good at and what we love.” After making the statement the special education teacher leaves the room and is followed by two other teachers that have been identified as teachers that will not be returning as special education teachers. The researcher is inclined to believe by the reactions during the meeting that certification is a
contributing factor that influences teacher's decisions to remain or leave as special education teachers.

Family Support

The researcher observes the attendance pattern of special education teachers for an extended period of time and observes that substitute teachers are frequently needed for the Special Education Department. The researcher observed that in many situations a substitute teacher is not available to cover the special education class due to last minute planning and request. The researcher notes that special education teachers call into the main office of the local school being observed to state that they would not be reporting to school and a substitute would be needed for class coverage for that day. The researcher noted that on many occasions the special education teacher provided as a reason for being absent that child care was not available for the day, but most frequently that their child had a doctor’s appointment. On many occasions, the researcher notes that the special education teacher was absent due to an ill child. The researcher notes that three of the five teachers that were observed as being absent frequently over the period during the observation, the teacher had decided to leave as a special education teacher and would not be returning for the next school year.

Documentation

The researcher was provided with documentation from the metro school district, a copy of data received from teachers that leave the district. Teachers that resign from the District were asked to complete an exit interview to determine the reason that the teacher is leaving the District. This data were used to determine the rate at which
teachers leave the District and the factors that are encouraging teachers to resign from the
district. The researcher recorded the top three highest percentages of special education
teachers attrition and the reasons for their leaving. The researcher requested data from
the last three school years within the Metro Atlanta School District. For confidentiality
purposes, the researcher interpreted the data of the Metro School District because the data
were provided on District letterhead. The exit interviews are grouped according to the
discipline that the teacher teaches, or the role that the teacher plays within the school
district, (i.e., counselor, special education teacher, registrar, general education teacher,
administrator, etc.). According to the documentation gathered by the researcher as it
pertains to retention for the Metro District for special education teachers, special
education teachers report leaving for the reasons indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

*Exit Interview Documentation from Local School District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Teachers Leaving District</th>
<th>Year of Resignation</th>
<th>Reason for Leaving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Lack of Administrative Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Location of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Better opportunity in another School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Lack of Administrative Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Better Opportunity in Another School District</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Percentage of Teachers</th>
<th>Year of Leaving District</th>
<th>Year of Resignation</th>
<th>Reason for Leaving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Location of School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Administrative Support**

The researcher was able to conclude from the documentation that special education teachers left the Metro Atlanta School District for several reasons, but the top three reasons over the past three years was consistent. Administrative support continues to be an emerging theme and factor for reasons that special education teachers are leaving the profession. The documentation shows that 55% of special education teachers that left the local school district in 2005 reported leaving due to administrative support. The documentation also shows that the following year 2006, 41% reported leaving as a special education teacher due to Administrative support. The researcher finds that this data reported in the documentation provided by the local school district is pertinent to show that administrative support is a factor influencing the retention of special education teachers.

**Teacher Certification**

There is some evidence from the documentation that links certification status to special education teacher attrition. The document obtained from the local school district shows that in 2006, 41% left due to teacher certification and 61% left the local school
district due to teacher certification. The documentation is not clear as to whether these teachers that reported leaving due to certification were unable to obtain certification or if other complications persisted. The documentation is also not clear as to whether or not NCLB mandates contributed to certification complications; the researcher is clear that certification is negatively influencing teacher retention for the local school district.

*Family*

The researcher notes from the documentation received from the local school district that family contributes to the reasons that special education teachers left the district. The documentation shows that 43.1% left the local school district in 2007 due to family. The documentation provided reports that teachers reported leaving due to wanting to take care of their younger children at home and taking care of an ill family member or spouse. The documentation substantiates that family is a theme as observed and noted in the field notes and provided by the interviewees during the interviews and member checking process.

*Location of School*

The documentation received from the local school district reports that in 2005, 43% left the district due to the location of the school that they had been assigned to. The location of the school may include but is not limited to schools within the district that are located in the north of the local school district, and schools located in the south of the local school district. Location of the school might also include that in the south of the school district, the schools might be considered as urban schools and are all categorized as Title I schools. The researcher concludes that location of the school is a contributing
factor for teacher attrition but according to the other data collection methods is not an emerging theme.

According to the documentation, most special education teachers left the local school district due to the lack of administrative support, certification (it was not specified what specifically) and location of the school. The documentation substantiates the fact that administrative support and certification of special education teachers are factors that are continuing to influence the attrition and retention of special education teachers.
CHAPTER V
RESEARCH FINDINGS

The researcher found that there are several factors that attribute to the retention of highly qualified special education teachers. After analyzing the data from the interviews, the observations and field notes, as well as the documentation, the researcher found some common themes from all data. The researcher analyzed the data vertically as well as horizontally which involved a close, in-depth view of all themes that derived from the data analysis.

Administrative Support

The researcher found that the relationship between central office administration and building administration attrition are mixed. In this study of intent to leave, the researcher found that central office administrators exert an indirect influence on attrition through professional development opportunities and stress while building administration exerts a direct affect through evaluations, professional development and the lack of not reporting to IEP meetings. Furthermore, the researcher also found a relationship between principal support and attrition in the study of attrition behavior. It is likely that the different dependent measures may have influenced these differences or the different analyses employed. In this study of special education teachers, the special education teacher did indicate dissatisfaction with central office administrators as frequently as or more frequently than with principals.
The researcher also believes that of those who interviewed and were observed in the local school district identify dissatisfaction with support from central administration and dissatisfaction with principal support influenced and stated that these factors influenced their decision to leave. The finding that central office administrators play a critical role in the lives of special educators is not surprising, given that district administrators usually have a key role in determining special education policies, regulating IDEA requirements, and identifying and placing students with disabilities. More specifically, a higher level of support from principals is directly or indirectly associated with more professional development opportunities greater job satisfaction, reduced stress, and higher levels of commitment amongst special education teachers.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Mandates

According to the interviews, observations and documentation, certain factors have had an increasingly surprising effect on special education teacher retention. According to the data, teachers believe that the NCLB mandates have become frustrating, thus increasing the probability that they would leave and teach students in the general education arena. Administrators that have direct contact with teachers of students with special needs and administrators that are Central Office staff, expressed concerns that they believe that NCLB mandates are factors that are influencing special educators to leave. NCLB mandates are encouraging teachers to not only leave the profession but most are leaving to teach general education.
Professional Development

The researcher did not include professional development as an independent variable, although it emerged from the interviews, observations and field notes. Teachers as well as administration expressed that administration is not knowledgeable concerning special education and lack the necessary skills to lead special education teachers. Teachers contend that incentives would increase the probability that they remain as special educators, although if administration would provide better resources, be more visible and attend meetings this would increase the chances that they remain within the profession.

Administration believes that administrative support and ineffective leadership styles had no direct effect on their decision to remain as a special educator. Administration believes that support that is currently provided has no direct effect on the retention of special education teachers. The researcher is inclined to believe that factors that influence special education teacher retention regarding administrative supportive, or the lack thereof, the NCLB mandates and the lack of professional development for the administrative staff, certification, and family. Through the interview process, as well as observations and documentation obtained, the special education teachers and administration alike feel the pressure of NCLB mandates as well as a lack of preparation to lead special education teachers. The researcher also concludes that there was no direct correlation between personal factors and the influence of highly qualified special education teacher retention rates. The researcher found no direct correlation between special education teacher retention and personal factors.
Certification

Special education teacher certification emerged as a theme via the interviews, observations and the documentation. Many special education teachers were recorded as describing the process as becoming too difficult, mundane and confusing. Many special education teachers refused to even complete the process due to loss paperwork on the part of the local school district and the amount of time that it takes to complete the teacher certification process. Certification has negatively affected special education teachers in many ways as it is directly linked to the NCLB mandates and meeting its criteria for certification. Many special education teachers are unable to acquire certification due to being unable to meet the demands of the NCLB mandates. Many teachers reportedly decided to pursue other ventures that may not require certification. Several teachers reported feeling a sense of anxiety and found that continuing certification for special education was a bit too much to bear and the process for certification had become too difficult. Certification for the special educator may involve changing the status from a specific disability area (i.e., emotional behavior disorder, intellectual disability, mild disability) to show that the special education teacher has acquired certification in the area of Interrelated Special Education. This process may be doable by reviewing the teacher’s college transcripts, but in far too many cases this process was completed by the teacher having to endure another assessment of some sort. Thus certification is a factor that is influencing the attrition of special education teachers.
Family Support

Family pressure is another potential force at work in the retention of special education teachers. Many of the teachers interviewed and observed report that their families initially disapproved of their decisions to enter teaching, saying that family members thought teaching did not offer enough status or money. Of those interviewed several spoke explicitly about family members having preferred that they pursue careers in medicine, law, or engineering. In almost all cases, special education teachers reported that, once they were accepted into or graduated from college or became financially independent, the parental disapproval eased. Though this study is too small for anything even resembling conclusiveness, the researcher suspects that family pressures around teaching are partly linked to the negative connotations surrounded oftentimes by teaching special education.

The researcher believes from the review of the observations, interviews and documentations that a desire to remain home with the younger children also has had an influence on special education teacher’s decision to leave or remain. Many teachers describe wanting to take care of their children on a daily basis. The researcher also found a few special education teachers were leaving to take care of ill family members, but also described that this wasn’t the only factor that had influenced their decision to leave.

After careful consideration, reviewing the interviews, observations and field notes, and the documentation provided by the local school district, no matter the role that they play within the school district, on all levels they felt that special educators were treated differently than general education teachers. All interviewees shared the view that
special education teachers were rarely supported by administration for lack of adequate training. Administration and teachers alike agree that administration could benefit from relevant professional development. Teachers that are certified and are currently teaching students with special needs as well as teachers that are certified and expressed intent to leave the expressed concerns that NCLB mandates, administrative support or the lack thereof or ineffective leadership styles, the certification process and family have had a direct effect on their decisions to remain or leave as a special educator.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher will discuss major themes that emerged from the research finding as analyzed through interviews, observations and field notes, as well as documentation received from the local school district. The major themes that will be discussed are as follows:

- Administrative Support
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Mandates
- Professional Development
- Certification
- Family Support

The Researcher will discuss implications that may have derived from the research as it pertains to the major themes that emerged, as well as recommendations for future research.

Administrative Support

This research concludes that support has been shown to be critical to teacher retention, particularly administrative support. One way of providing support to teachers is through collaborative environments. However, the relationship of collaboration to attrition has received only scant attention in the attrition literature. Given the different cultures in general and special education (Pugach, 1992) and the isolation that many
special educators experience (CEC, 2000), collaborative environments have the potential to help cultivate better understanding between general and special educators, and foster a sense of belonging for special educators. Moreover, this research suggests that collaborative environments have the potential to benefit teachers by preventing burnout, heightening teachers' sense of efficacy, and improving teachers' knowledge base (Brownell, Yeager, Rennells, & Riley, 1997). The researcher believes that the administrator should consider the nature and extent of collaboration and its effects on special educators' affective reactions to work and career plans. Moreover, because administrative support is strongly related to attrition among teachers, we need to know more about what supportive administrators do and how they promote positive school climates and working conditions in special education.

The researcher also concludes that teacher and work factors are critical to special educators' job satisfaction and their subsequent career decisions. Attrition researchers have identified several key teacher characteristics and personal factors that influence teachers' decisions to leave special education: (a) there are consistent reports that younger and inexperienced special educators are more likely to leave than their older, more experienced counterparts; (b) there is support from two major studies that uncertified teachers are more likely to leave than certified teachers; (c) special educators with higher test scores are more likely to leave; and (d) teachers' personal circumstances and priorities influence attrition and retention. The majority of attrition studies focus on the effects of district and school working conditions, work assignment factors, and teachers' affective reactions to their work. Work environment factors associated with
staying include: (a) higher salaries; (b) positive school climate; (c) adequate support systems, particularly principal and central office support; (d) opportunities for professional development; (e) reasonable role demand; and (f) manageable case loads. Problematic district and school factors, especially low salaries, poor climate, lack of administrative support, and role overload and dissonance, lead to negative affective reactions, (e.g., high levels of stress, low levels of job satisfaction, and low levels of commitment). These negative reactions can often lead to withdrawal and eventually attrition.

**Implication**

Certain working conditions are important for effective teaching (e.g., reasonable role expectations; time to teach and collaborate; support of colleagues, administrators, and parents). The retention research in special education documents that perceived work conditions are related to teachers' career plans and attrition. One question that remains unanswered is the extent to which school, district, state, and federal requirements contribute to the overload that teachers report. Some qualitative data suggest that it is not the paper work itself, but the combination of meetings, forms, testing, scoring, written reports, scheduling, and paper work that creates the problem. In-depth qualitative studies are needed to promote an understanding of issues that researchers have primarily described at a superficial level (e.g., role problems, paper work concerns). The researcher believes that future researchers should focus on questions that include:

1. What in particular contributes to role overload and dissonance for special education teachers?
2. What needs to happen in a district/school so that teachers’ roles can be restructured to devote more time to student-centered tasks?

3. Are there states or districts in which special educators report overall fewer role-related problems than others? If so, what are these districts/states doing differently?

4. What are reasonable case loads given the demands of different service-delivery models (e.g., resource, self-contained, inclusion)?

5. What supports and structures are needed to allow teachers sufficient opportunities to collaborate?

Given the need to recruit and retain teachers from different races in special education, it is critical that race be included as a variable in special education studies.

Recommendation

Retention of the Highly Qualified Special Educator will continue to be a problem until special educators begin to feel a sense of support from the administrative staff. The researcher believes that future research must address programs and strategies to reduce attrition among early career teachers, given they are at most risk of leaving. Effective administrative practice should include relevant and effective mentoring programs for special education teachers. A neglected aspect in the attrition literature is beginning teachers’ perspectives, qualifications, and work factors that influence their decisions to stay and leave. As Pugach (1992) observed, “A major question that has not been addressed in the attrition/retention literature is the socialization of what goes in between choosing to become a special education teacher and choosing to leave.” One way to
address this gap in the literature is to study teachers during their preparation programs and follow these teachers through the early career period. A range of approaches might be used, including journals and logs, interviews over time, observations, and recordings of critical incidents.

Researchers may consider investigating what beginning special educators perceive as effective mentoring programs and examined the impact of such programs on their plans to remain in special education. Although the effect size is small, perceived effectiveness of mentoring is significantly correlated with teachers’ plans to remain in special education and with special educators’ job satisfaction. The researcher did not find the level and helpfulness of induction support provided to beginning teachers to be significantly related to their plans to stay; however, those with higher levels of induction support were more likely than those with lower levels of support to see their roles as manageable, believe that they can get through to the most difficult students, and believe they are successful in providing education to students with IEPs.

An important contribution of this study is the identification of specific aspects of effective mentoring, which includes selecting a special education mentor (as opposed to a non-special educator), even if that special educator works in a different school. Assistance provided in the area of emotional support and the mechanics of the job are particularly important. Moreover, because administrative support is strongly related to attrition among teachers, we need to know more about what supportive administrators do and how they promote positive school climates and working conditions in special education.
NCLB Mandates

This researcher found that highly qualified certification status is linked to special education teacher retention. In this study special educators, reported a higher level of retention among uncertified teachers than certified teachers in regards to highly qualified status. Certification has also been linked with intent to leave. This researcher’s observations conclude that uncertified special educators were more likely to indicate plans to leave as soon as possible than their certified counterparts. The researcher found a relationship between lack of certification and higher levels of retention, special education teachers on provisional or emergency certificates should be considered at high risk of leaving and in particular need of support.

Very little attention has been paid to factors within a school, descriptions of what these problems mean to teachers on a day-to-day basis, and how problems and issues contribute to decisions to leave over time. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of stayers would provide a better understanding of resilience and why some special educators remain involved and committed to working with students with disabilities for many years.

Implication

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and a related mandate, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), have had a tremendous impact on the retention rate of special education teachers. In an effort to increase student achievement amongst students with disabilities, the nation’s report card has been mandated by this new report card. On the contrary, the new NCLB mandates have done the opposite and are continuously
running special education teachers away from the classroom setting, with a final thought of not returning. Indeed, in order to achieve optimum success in regards to teacher retention, the U.S. Congress should work to align Title II of the Higher Education Act with NCLB so that states will receive the financial support to address the teacher shortage in the form of loan forgiveness for candidates who plan to teach in shortage areas. Having to spend one's own money to take test and apply for teacher certification is also a concern for teachers and Administrators alike. If significant funds are available for prospective teachers, this support will likely attract increasing numbers of teachers into special education and other shortage areas. Although a mandate for highly qualified teachers and related legislation has the potential for increasing the number of certified special education teachers, it also has the potential for exacerbating the teacher shortage. For example, if the content area requirement in NCLB is applied to secondary-level special education teachers, these teachers will be required to hold certification in both special education and the content area they teach (e.g., mathematics, which is also an area of teacher shortages).

A policy initiative from NCLB emerged to address the "highly qualified" mandate, as state-level officials became aware of the difficulties to inherent and ensure that all teachers were highly qualified (and thus fully certified) by 2005-2006. Many states offered alternative routes to certification that removed certain requirements or lowered standards for certification. The most extreme of these alternatives was the route that was included in NCLB and promoted by advocates of deregulation of teacher certification (Paige, 2002; Walsh, 2001). This option allowed anyone holding a
bachelor's degree to take a test of content and/or pedagogical knowledge and become certified. Thus, these individuals become "highly qualified" without any coursework or field experience in education. Although some evidence is emerging to indicate that student achievement outcomes are lower for teachers who are prepared by alternate routes that significantly lower requirements for certification (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002), it appears that these routes to certification will be increasingly offered as the deadline for the "highly qualified" mandate approaches. If we are to provide highly qualified teachers for every student with a disability in the United States, it is important to fully understand the nature and scope of the current teacher shortage in special education.

Recommendation

Special education teachers must begin to feel a sense of relief from the NCLB mandates in order for us to recruit and maintain effective teaching staff for the special needs population. Researchers that plan to take a look at the retention of the highly qualified special education teacher retention rate might consider researching how paperwork overload affects the rate of teacher attrition. One might also consider teacher preparation as well as administration preparation as an integral part of research and determining factors for retention. Although such a mandate would provide increasing assurance that all special education teachers are highly qualified to teach content area subjects, it could also make the shortage of special education teachers worse, unless powerful policy initiatives are enacted to counteract this outcome, which might include incentives to deter teachers from joining the general education force. If we are to provide
highly qualified teachers for every student with a disability in the United States, it is important to fully understand the nature and scope of the current teacher shortage in special education. Understanding the teacher shortage could very well mean making the NCLB mandates easier to obtain for special education teachers.

Professional Development

Professional development may be thought of as one dimension within the broad concept of support. The researcher concludes that a relationship between professional growth opportunities and attrition, and this research study did not find that satisfaction with professional opportunities related to the attrition behavior of special educators. It is believed that professional development has an indirect effect on teachers’ intent to leave and a direct influence on teachers’ commitment to the profession. Professional development opportunities refer to the degree to which special educators perceive that they have opportunities to grow and advance professionally, as well as development provided for administration to become more knowledgeable and sensitive to the needs of the special education teacher. The researcher observed that teachers who perceive greater professional development opportunities experienced less role dissonance. Professional development was observed as an important need of the support at both the district and school levels. It is interesting to note that over half of those surveyed in this study did not feel there were many opportunities to learn new techniques and strategies in their district.

Although school districts support staff development, they do not reliably incorporate best practices, e.g., engaging teachers in the learning process, allowing time
to plan now to implement new skills, train administration for IEP meeting, and the like. The researcher believes that relevant professional development would increase retention rates among special education teachers.

Implication

The relationship between teacher quality and retention has received little attention, and few conclusions can be drawn. Some researchers have provided evidence from the review of the literature that teachers with little to no professional development opportunities are more likely to leave. The researcher believes that the district might plan to focus on requiring administrators to attend a required number of professional development hours which focuses strictly on special education teachers and sensitivity issues to meet their needs. However, little is known about how educational background, preparation, or classroom practice is related to career longevity.

Policymakers and administrators interested in reducing retention rates among special education teachers must facilitate the development of better work environments for special educators. Addressing issues such as teacher role overload and the need for critical supports (e.g., administrative support, professional development) must be addressed to ensure that teachers can be effective in their work. A holistic look at creating positive work environments should not only reduce attrition behavior, but should also help sustain special educators’ involvement and commitment in their work. The researcher believes that there is a clear implication that teacher and administration preparation at the collegiate level could use some serious attention. Many administrators state that taking the basic special education classes during undergraduate and graduate
studies is simply not enough. Administrators and teachers alike agree that it would be helpful to allow administrators during graduate studies to be engaged in learning more about special education and become knowledgeable about more that the basics of special education.

A teacher workforce that is well-trained, engaged in continuing professional development, and committed to staying in the state, district and school will result in all students receiving appropriate instruction and increasing their achievement.

Recommendation

The researcher believes that focusing on the support needs of early teachers is important because teachers are at risk of leaving during these years. Special educators, like general educators, must engage in educational planning, understand the curriculum, and become familiar with school routines. Special educators have numerous additional responsibilities and concerns related to working with students with significant learning and behavioral problems. A few qualitative studies have documented the concerns experienced by beginning special educators—managing paperwork, making accommodations for instruction and testing, developing and monitoring IEPs, scheduling students, and collaborating with teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and related services. Policymakers and administrators may be inclined to focus on mandating a more increased amount of relevant professional development as a requirement for administrative staff and teachers alike. It might be considered that administration be required to be familiar with the laws that govern special education students and be required to learn what is need to conduct successful Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. The researcher
believes that due to the clear implication that teacher and administration preparation at the collegiate level could use some serious attention. The researcher recommends that it would be helpful to allow administrators during graduate studies to be engaged in learning more about special education and become knowledgeable about more that the basics of special education.

Certification

The individual achievement of children is highly dependent on the effectiveness of the teacher, and the impact of ineffective or unqualified teachers across years dooms children to instructional losses that cannot be regained. Teacher retention initiatives are most often based on this recognized need to keep in classrooms those teachers who are qualified and utilize effective teaching strategies, demonstrated by increased student achievement year after year. To achieve increased student achievement the Researcher believes that the local school district must take some time to focus its attention on teacher certification and making that process better for special education teachers. Teacher certification for the local school district and making the process easier has been linked to the amount of money that the district must invest to improve the process and the number of personnel that would be required in human resources to improve the process. Human resource departments in local school districts are usually staffed with the same number of employees, whether teachers are staying or leaving; therefore, some fixed costs will prevail, regardless of the “state of teacher attrition” within a district. Once all of these factors are accounted for, a yearly reporting mechanism should be put in place that clearly demonstrates the savings in resources that accrue when unintended attrition is
lowered. The use of lower turnover cost savings can then be focused on teacher retention activities. One source of funding to assist in planning for recruitment and retention initiatives can be accessed through the timely implementation of the Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which encourages local districts to develop and implement mechanisms to assist schools to effectively recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, principals and specialists in core academic subject areas, and increase teacher certification.

Implication

There has been a clear upward trend in the number of teachers needed over time to fill vacancies and replace unqualified personnel. Roughly 10% of special educators are not fully certified for their positions, according to recent literature review in the factors that influence teacher retention, due to certification. However, these statistics may not fully illustrate the extent of the teacher shortage problem in special education. For example, school districts may reduce services to students with disabilities or raise class size limits to accommodate the shortage in teachers in regards to certification complications. The shortage problem has serious implications for students with disabilities if they are being taught by people with less than adequate preparation. Many researchers have discussed a range of consequences of the shortage problem, including inadequate educational experiences for students, reduced student achievement levels, and insufficient competence of graduates in the work place. This implication alone is an indication that work must be done to correct the issue of special education teachers leaving the profession due to certification status.
Recommendation

Special education teachers touch the lives of all children from a variety of backgrounds, including those from families that exhibit a wide range of cultural and linguistic diversity. Special education teachers also touch the lives of children with varying ability levels, and disabilities. It is the profession in which we have a chance to provide opportunities that might otherwise be lost. Sometimes, we have the opportunity to change the course of future events for many children who come to school with significant disadvantages, such as poverty, parental and societal neglect, as well as intellectual, social and physical disabilities. It is a profession, however, that loses thousands of dedicated members each year, putting those most vulnerable children and youth at risk of failing to realize opportunities afforded to them through quality education. Special education teachers lose the opportunities to touch these lives when certification becomes a stumbling block in their abilities to continue as an educator.

The researcher believes that future research might consider focusing on carefully designed induction programs which can help teachers cope with challenging tasks. Novice teachers who are given reasonable assignments, adequate feedback, and personal support are more likely to acquire the skills needed for a satisfying teaching career and to develop greater commitment to teaching. Reducing attrition should not be the primary goal of induction programs; indeed, carefully designed induction programs would be needed even if a teacher surplus existed. Induction programs must be designed with the primary purpose of helping teachers become more effective supportive and carefully designed environments. If this is the primary goal and teachers develop competence and
satisfaction in their work, attrition will likely be reduced. It might also be considered that Administrators and policy makers might consider reviewing the process for certification. It might be useful to the special education teacher to not be mandated to process certification through the local school district, but that the special education teacher is allowed to complete the process through communication with Georgia Professional Standards Commission. The researcher also believes that it may be beneficial to the school organization as well as the teacher to improve the certification process throughout the district so that the process might be more reliable as it pertains to completion.

Family Support

The researcher found that family support is a factor in influencing the retention of special education teachers. Family members of many of the teachers believe that the special education teacher might be better off if they found a profession that is more notable and more respected. Many of the special education teacher's family members also believe that the job of the special education teacher is too tedious, takes too much family time, and is not compensated at an appropriate level. The researcher found that family pressure proves to be a negative force in the retention of special education teachers. The researcher discovered that many of the teachers believed that their families initially disapproved of their decisions to enter teaching, let alone remain as a special education teacher. Many spoke about family members having preferred that they pursue careers in medicine, law, or engineering; they were depended upon to become financially independent, although some were not able to on a special education teacher salary.
The researcher believes from the review of the observations, interviews and
documentations that a desire to remain home with the younger children also has had an
influence on special education teacher’s decision to leave or remain. Many teachers
describe wanting to take care of their children on a daily basis. The Researcher also
found a few special education teachers were leaving to take care of ill family members,
but also described that this wasn’t the only factor that had influenced their decision to
leave.

Implication

The individual achievement of children is highly dependent on the effectiveness
of the teacher, and the impact of ineffective or unqualified teachers across years dooms
children to instructional losses that cannot be regained. Teacher retention initiatives are
most often based on this recognized need to keep in classrooms those teachers who are
qualified and utilize effective teaching strategies, demonstrated by increased student
achievement year after year. Teacher retention being influenced by family support or the
lack thereof may pose a problem for administration, both on thee building level and
central office.

Family support as observed by the researcher is one of the dynamics of retention
that cannot be controlled, investing in resources that effectively address the reasons for
teacher attrition increases the likelihood that a high quality teacher who increases student
achievement will stay in the field. Special educators have indicated that they were more
likely to stay in teaching when their families support their decision to become or remain
as a special education teacher, their small children are doing well, and no sickness will
require the special education teacher to leave the profession to be a care taker of children or other family members. Retaining staff in special education teachers, is a district’s first step in developing high quality, hard-to-replace teachers who can increase achievement of all students.

**Recommendation**

The researcher believes that a better understanding of special educators’ entry into teaching would provide critical information on how to best support their transition into teaching. There is increasing interest in supporting beginning teachers; however, the specific needs of beginning special educators, and even fewer reports are available on the effectiveness of induction programs. There is an urgent need for data regarding the effectiveness of different types and sources of support for new teachers.

Support has been shown to be critical to teacher retention, particularly administrative support throughout the certification process. One way of providing support to teachers is through collaborative environments. Given the different cultures in general and special education and the isolation that many special educators experience collaborative environments have the potential to help cultivate better understanding between general and special educators, and foster a sense of belonging for special educators. Moreover, this research suggests that collaborative environments have the potential to benefit teachers by preventing burnout, heightening teachers’ sense of efficacy, and improving teachers’ knowledge base. Future research should consider the nature and extent of collaboration and its effects on special educators’ affective reactions to work and career plans. These collaborative environments may assist special education
teachers in their efforts to encourage family members to support their decisions to enter or remain in the teaching force. The researcher believes that family might not be a factor for special education teacher retention if the requirements for Family Medical Leave Act were redeveloped so that teachers that must tend to the care of small children and other family members might not lose a substantial amount of pay and other benefits.

**Summary**

In conclusion, understanding why teachers leave is the first step in getting them to stay. Teachers leave when they encounter environments that lack essential professional supports: (a) support from school leadership, (b) organizational structures and workforce conditions that convey respect and value for them, and (c) induction and mentoring programs for new and experienced teachers. Special educators, the professionals in greatest need in public schools today (American Association for Employment in Education [AAEE], 2003), work daily to deliver on the promises of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), yet the complexities of the profession and the environments in which they often work conspire to convince them to leave. The researcher finds that a wide range of factors influence retention. Most of the retention studies focus on problematic work environment variables and their relationships to attrition. The research results suggests that work environmental factors, (e.g., low salaries, poor climate, lack of administrative support, role problems) can lead to negative affective reactions (e.g., high levels of stress as well as low levels of job satisfaction and commitment). These negative reactions can lead to withdrawal and eventually attrition. In addition, teacher characteristics and qualification variables that are linked to attrition
include the following: (a) special educators who are younger and inexperienced are at higher risk of leaving that their older and more experienced counterparts, (b) those who are uncertified are more likely to leave than those who are certified, and (c) those with higher test scores are more likely to leave than those with lower scores.

Longitudinal studies of special educators from their entry into teacher preparation programs through first years of teaching are needed. A closer look is needed at the role that teacher preparation plays in the development of special educators’ career dispositions (e.g., involvement, initial commitment) and decision to stay or leave. Also, little is known about strategies that faculty in teacher preparation programs might employ to increase special educators’ survival in teaching. What steps might institutions of higher education do to help future administrators and teachers advocate for effective working conditions in special education?

Recommendations from the researcher with regards to the findings of this study might conclude that special education teachers are leaving in great numbers due to the lack of administrative support, NCLB mandates, lack of professional development for administration and teachers, lack of family support and the certification process. Administrators might also want to focus on helping teachers to meet the tedious requirements of NCLB and working with district officials to make the certification process and procedures less confusing. The researcher believes that school level and district level administration staff might consider taking whatever steps needed to retain special education teachers with five or more years of service.
Nationwide, some 2.4 million teachers will be needed in the next 11 years because of teacher attrition and retirement and increased student enrollment. Teacher shortages are not new. Periodically, throughout the past half century, there have been fewer teachers available than were needed, and policy makers at the state and federal levels have responded by stepping up recruitment efforts and issuing temporary teaching credentials to those without qualifications. However, three things are new—the requirement that teachers in all schools be "highly qualified" the realization that it is not so much teacher recruitment that is the problem in staffing the nation's K-12 schools but teacher retention; and growing evidence that, similar to every other problem that plagues the nation's schools, the problem of teacher retention is indefinitely here to stay.
APPENDIX A

Five or More Years Teacher Interview Protocol

1. What do you consider as characteristics of effective Leadership?

2. How has the support provided by Administration encouraged you, or discouraged you to remain as special educator?

3. Why would changes made to leadership, if any, increase the probability that you remain as a special education teacher?

4. How would incentives offered by Administration impact your decision to remain as a special educator?

5. Why would support by Administration be instrumental in your decision to remain as a special educator?

6. How have the NCLB mandates for highly qualified teacher impacted your decision to remain as a special educator?

7. How could Administration support you more as a special educator?

8. How have personal factors influenced your decision to remain or leave the profession as a special educator?

9. What special provisions did you have to make to become highly qualified as a special educator? How will the provisions made impact your decision to remain as a special educator or transfer to general education?
10. Why should support from Administration be required for special education teachers? How would this impact special education teacher retention?

Race/Ethnicity: ____________________________
Age: ____________________________
Gender: Male ____ Female ____
Years of teaching experience: __________
APPENDIX B

Intent to Leave Teacher Interview Protocol

1. What do you consider as characteristics of effective leadership?

2. How has the support provided by Administration discouraged you to remain as special educator?

3. What changes, if any, made to leadership would have increased the probability that you remained as a special education teacher?

4. How would incentives offered by Administration have impacted your decision to remain as a special educator?

5. Why would support, or the lack thereof, by Administration have been instrumental in your decision to remain as a special educator?

6. How have the NCLB mandates for highly qualified teacher impacted your decision to leave the profession as a special educator?

7. How could Administration have supported you more as a special educator?

8. How have personal factors influenced your decision to leave the profession as a special educator?

9. What special provisions did you have to make to become highly qualified as a special educator? How have provisions made impacted your decision to leave as a special educator?
10. Why should support from Administration be required for special education teachers? How would this impact special education teacher retention?

* * * * * * *

Race/Ethnicity: ______________________

Age: ______________________

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Years of teaching experience: __________
APPENDIX C

Building Administration Interview Protocol

1. How have the new NCLB mandates impacted your special education teaching staff retention rates?
2. How has the Administrative support offered impacted the retention rate of the special education staff?
3. Do you offer more support to special education teachers than general education teachers? Why or Why not?
4. What incentives, if any, do you think should be offered to special education teachers?
5. How would changing your leadership style increase the probability that you retain highly qualified special educators?
6. How have personal factors of your special education staff impacted the retention rate among the special education staff?
7. How should Administration be required to provide support for special education teachers which would impact teacher retention?
8. What special provisions have you made as a school leader to ensure that teachers who work to become highly qualified as a special educator remain within special education?
Appendix C (continued)

9. How have NCLB mandates impacted the number of teachers that transfer to general education?

10. How do you encourage special education teachers to remain on staff to increase the retention rate?
APPENDIX D

Central Office Administration Interview Protocol

1. Have the new NCLB mandates impacted special education teaching staff retention rates for the district?
2. What Administrative support do you offer to special education staff within the district?
3. How could incentives impact the retention of special education teachers?
4. How have personal factors of your special education staff impacted your retention rate among special education staff?
5. How should Central Office Administration be required to provide support for special education teachers which would impact retention?
6. What special provisions have you made as a school leader to ensure that teachers who work to become highly qualified as a special educator remain within special education within the district?
7. How have NCLB mandates impacted the number of teachers that transfer to general education?
8. How do you encourage special education teachers to remain within the district to increase the retention rate?
APPENDIX E

Research Consent Form

A Qualitative Study of Factors that Influence the Retention of Highly Qualified Special Education Teachers

Clark Atlanta University
Principle Investigator: Kimberly Gore

You are being asked to be a volunteer in a research study. To participate, you must read and agree to the following before you may proceed with the interview.

The interview asks about the effects of pre-determined factors on the educator’s decision to remain or leave the profession of teaching students with special needs. It also includes typical demographic questions.

I am recruiting up to 25 Special Education Teachers K-12, and Administrators to participate in this interview. The interview takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. While there is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study, the goal of this research is to provide information to help determine factors that might influence special education teacher retention.

The risks involved with participating in this study are no greater than those you would normally encounter while accessing the Internet on a personal computer at home or work. This interview does not ask for your name or any type of contact information (such as email address).

To make sure that this research is being carried out in the proper way, the Clark Atlanta University Review Board may review study records, including interview transcripts and interview protocol. Again, your privacy will be protected to the extent allowed by law.

You will not be paid for your participation, nor are there any financial costs to you to participate. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to be. You have the right to change your mind and leave the study at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty.

You have rights as a research volunteer. If you have any questions about the survey or your participation, feel free to contact Kimberly Gore-Green at (404) 397-6415 or by email at kigreen@atlanta.k12.ga.us.
APPENDIX F

Research Transcription

Research Findings—Interview of Special Educators

The Researcher began the research by soliciting volunteers of teachers that had taught students with special needs for at least five years as certified special educators for an interview. The Researcher found that the quest for certified educators was more difficult than anticipated. Actually, finding educators that were certified and had taught students with special needs took a great deal of time and consumed an insurmountable effort on the part of the Researcher. Seven participants were finally chosen and provided with details as pertains to the interview and ensured confidentiality (see Appendix E) in the form of the Research Consent Form. The Researcher stated that the interview would be taped for interviewing purposes and transcribed at a later date. The interview of the seven participants was conducted in group form with all respondents and Researcher seated in round table format. Each respondent was given a number by the Researcher and asked to audibly speak the number during the interview for transcribing purposes.

When asked to describe characteristics of effective leadership, Teacher #3 stated that effective leaders are those who get results, all other respondents agreed with a cheer and stated that was a “great way to put it.” The Researcher asked the respondent to be more specific in stating what “results” they were referring to. Speaking one at a time, the respondent #1 stated that results refer to student achievement, parent involvement,
Appendix F (continued)

and teacher satisfaction. The respondent went on to say that effective leadership included
supporting the staff, providing relevant professional development and being involved in
the entire school process. When asked how leaders could get more involved in the school
process, Teacher #7 stated that being present throughout the day might help with this
effort. Teacher #4 stated that effective leaders also have followers and effective leaders
have a vision and a mission that all are aware of and are willing to work towards
achievement. The Researcher then stated, “any other thoughts” and they all responded
“no.”

*Question by Researcher.* How has the support provided by Administration
encouraged you, or discouraged you to remain as special educator?

Teacher #5 seemed eager to answer this question first and responded that
Administration has made it extremely difficult to remain as a special educator. For the
most part reporting to work everyday was for her students and was getting more and
more difficult on a daily basis as her administrator does not support nor understand
special education. Teacher #6 quickly agreed and stated that Administration ignores
special education teachers and students and appears at times to avoid special students at
all costs. The Researcher asked how Administration had exhibited these behaviors.
Teacher #5 stated by not coming to meetings and not recognizing special education in
assemblies and faculty meetings. Teacher #2 stated that this behavior is very offensive
and often makes him want to seek employment elsewhere, possibly leaving special
education all together. Teacher #3 went on to add that special education almost always
gets the leftover books, supplies, food and anything else that the school has to offer. They all agreed and became a bit excited and their tones changed. In a quest for all to remain calm so that the interview could continue, the Researcher asked for any other comments. Teacher #1 stated, “I think we better leave that one alone.”

*Question by Researcher: Why would changes made to leadership, if any, increase the probability that you remain as a special education teacher?*

Teacher #2 answered, “Because Administration runs the show, you know, they set the entire tone for the atmosphere. The culture of the school and the climate of the school is created by Administration and when the leader or leaders lack skills to provide support, I feel I can go and offer my services elsewhere.” Teacher #5 added, “I would stay and continue as an educator or think more seriously about remaining if I knew that Administration was changing or offered some type of sensitivity training. Although I’ve signed my contract for next school term, I am almost sure that if things don’t change I’m outta here.” Teacher #1 and #6 both responded “me too.” Researcher replied, “any other responses” and they all shook their heads to indicate no.

*Question by Researcher: How would incentives offered by Administration impact your decision to remain as a special educator?*

Teacher #6: “Now you’re talking, incentives could add to this profession. With all of the extra paperwork, extra meetings and sometimes even extra training that we go through, somebody should give us something.” Teacher #1: “I know that’s right. We work harder than any other teacher in this building. We have IEP meetings, eligibility
meetings, behavior manifestation meetings, and any other meeting you can name.” All respondents laugh. “We change diapers, wipe drool, get cursed out on a constant basis, and sometimes we even get hit.” Teacher #3 stated: “We always have a new change in the law and we consistently have to keep abreast of changes with special education laws. If you ask me, we are truly the heart of education.” Teacher #4 stated: “Will this research help us with these incentives that you speak of?” Researcher responds: “I wish it were that easy; this interview will be used for the purpose of improving retention of special educators.”

*Question by Researcher: Why would support by Administration be instrumental in your decision to remain as a special educator?*

Teacher #3 stated that Administration is the driving force for morale and when morale is high it makes it easier to deal with the day to day trials of actually being a special educator. Teacher #7 stated that special educators do more than simply teach the curriculum we have to ensure that IEP (Individualized Education Plan) goals and objectives are aligned with the standards that the state set forth. It makes it difficult when Administrators really don’t understand what we have to do, let alone support us in our everyday efforts. “Special education is more than bad children and slow readers, we have so much to get done and it makes it hard when our leaders evaluate us and not understand the mission that is before us.” Teacher #1 stated that Administration support is instrumental in everything that we do. The support of our leaders ensures that we can efficiently get the job done. When administrators can’t sufficiently support
Appendix F (continued)

our efforts everyone loses and it makes it hard to enter the school everyday with high morale and smile and keep going. "Lack of support makes the job tedious and mundane," states Teacher #5. "Our children aren't included in anything. They aren't considered for awards and they are ignored, they eat separate lunches from their peers and are placed in separate class for exploratory classes; this is where support of Administration becomes instrumental. Lack of support is essential for student success and the retention of special education teachers." No other comments were provided for this question.

*Question by Researcher: How have the NCLB mandates for highly qualified teacher impacted your decision to remain as a special educator?*

Teacher #2 states that, "This has been the most difficult aspect of being a special educator. I attended school to become a special educator for five years. It goes without saying that I did not have a desire to teach general education in any content area, or I would have pursued that area of expertise. Nevertheless, I completed school thinking that everything would be great. I've taught special education as certified personnel for seven years, first the state mandated that all special educators become interrelated certified, and I did that. Then come NCLB, it's simply not fair. "The Researcher notices that Teacher #2 is actually crying and ask if anyone needs a break. The others console Teacher #2 and Teacher #4 continues by stating, "That's what NCLB has done. It's created a massacre of ill feelings and makes me want to walk out and go and sell insurance or something. It is very discouraging. We've worked hard to get certification
Appendix F (continued)

and now we have to take all of these test to become “highly qualified” and for what, no one really knows because children aren’t really benefiting from the extra certification. To be honest with you, as soon as I am notified that I have certification in Language Arts, I am leaving special education to go to general education. At least I won’t have IEP’s and I won’t have to worry about them meeting me to death, I will be free.”

Teacher #6 shouts: “Do you see what’s happening!” He’s a good teacher and he’s leaving, I am so disgusted with this process and its heart wrenching.” The Respondents all request a small break and the Researcher gladly grants the request. After 10 minutes we all returned to the conference room to continue the interview, and the Researcher questions all Respondents to determine if any other thoughts need to be expressed as it pertains to NCLB. Teacher #7 quickly responds, “Can we move on, I think we’ve said enough and all of us agree with what has been stated.” The Researcher grants the request.

*Question by Researcher:* How could Administration support you more as a special educator?

Teacher #1 starts off the conversation by stating, “Administration could begin by providing the necessary resources for us to teach our children. I get frustrated when every year materials are ordered for general education and when all other teachers have received all that they need then they come around and ask special educators if any of the items left over could be useful. Most times its junk and bits and pieces of items. There may be two books left with no computer disc like the other teachers have and no
Appendix F (continued)

teacher's edition; it's ridiculous. Administration could provide adequate teaching environments for special education, and stop putting us in classrooms that are small, with no ventilation, or classrooms that are located in the damp basement of the school.” Teacher #4 interrupts and says, “I know that’s right; they could support us by understanding what we do, attend some type of training to understand special education and what it means to implement IEP’s and teach the curriculum all at one time.” “I’d like to see Administration attend difficult meetings to answer concerns of parents and actually stress to general educators how important it is for them to attend scheduled meetings. More than anything, I want Administration to treat me like any other teacher in the building. After all I went to school, earned a degree just like everyone else and I believe I deserve the same respect as an educator,” states Teacher #5. The Researcher notices that all other respondents are shaking their head in agreement in unison. The Researcher states, “So, you all want to be treated as the general educators are treated within your building.” They all respond a definite “yes.”

Question by Researcher: How have personal factors influenced your decision to remain or leave the profession as a special educator?

Teacher #6 states, “Personal factors have no effect on my decision to leave or remain as a special educator. I believe that if working conditions improve I would remain as a special educator through retirement. If things don’t get better, I am truly going to have to pursue another profession.” Teacher #7 states, “I am not sure if I am willing to change professions, but I too must agree that personal factors have not
Appendix F (continued)

swayed my decision as a special educator one way or the other. I've been doing this for
some time now and never considered leaving to anything that has occurred in my life
personally.” Researcher asks, “Have personal factors influenced anyone in this room
to remain or leave the profession.” All respondents stated, “no.”

*Question by Researcher: What special provisions did you have to make to
become highly qualified as a special educator?*

How will the provisions made impact your decision to remain as a special
educator or transfer to general education?” Teacher #1 quickly responds, “Becoming
highly qualified has become a thorn in my flesh simply because I am the self-contained
teacher, which means I must become highly-qualified in all core areas or risk being
transferred to Collaborative. I enjoy teaching in the self-contained model and I have no
desire to team teach with a general educator, but to become HQ in all areas with cost me
about $600.00 or more to take the test; considering I pass on the first attempt. I’ve had
to purchase study materials and make every effort to pass the new GACE test that is
given to special educators. I am really considering going to teach in the general
education classes, maybe then I’ll get the respect that I deserve.” Teacher # 4 interjects,
“I’ve had to do the same things. I haven’t had to become highly qualified in all areas,
but every year they come in and assess my certification to tell me what I need to keep
my job, and every year it seems to be something different; a different test, different
expectations, and I’m tired. I am highly qualified in language arts and social science
and I have applied for general education positions. Yes, I am thinking that maybe it is
best, it is so depressing because I love special education, but I can’t afford to take a test every year that cost $165.00 a pop.” “I know what you mean, last year I taught Science, and yes I am highly qualified in Science, but if I want to teach another subject I’ll have to test or go into the Collaborative model, and that’s no fun at all,” states Teacher #3. Teacher #5 adds, “pretty soon we’ll all be in general education, who do they think will continue to take test after test, when we’ve spent thousands of dollars in college.” No other responses were made as it pertains to this question.

Question by Researcher: Why should support from Administration be required for special education teachers? How would this impact special education teacher retention?

“Special education is just as described, we are special. It takes a special individual to effectively teach children with exceptionalities, just anyone can’t do it. That alone is a reason that Administration should be required to support us within the profession. If it were mandated that we receive a certain amount of support, teachers would be running to teach special education; instead teaching are running away. Who wants to teach children that can’t read and forget information on an hour to hour basis, and are ignored and never recognized, only those that are special can do it, and do it well, states Teacher #2. Teacher #5 added, “I wouldn’t dream of leaving special education if Administration were required to support special education. I have an idea better than that, make support of special education a part of the Annual Evaluation.” Everyone in the room laughs and agrees. Teacher #1 adds, “Support of all educators
should be a requirement. I think that sometime Administration forgets that they were once in the classroom and the uncomfortable feeling of no support or an ineffective administrator; and if you’re not support all educators in the building, then yes, you’re ineffective. If it were a requirement, we wouldn’t be having this interview, you wouldn’t have a dissertation topic, and there would not be an issue.” The room was silent for a brief moment and suddenly Teacher #6 stands and gives a clap, and they all begin to stand one by one.

The Researcher expressed that was a fabulous way to end the interview session and thanked all volunteers. The Researcher stated that they’d all get an opportunity for member checking of the transcripts. Everyone left the room and the interview was adjourned. It should be noted that the interview was made up of four African-Americans, two Caucasians, and one Latino. It was also five females and two males. All of whom had been teaching for eight or more years as a certified special education teacher.

*Interview of Special Educators with Intent to Leave*

The Researcher began the research by soliciting volunteers of teachers that had expressed intent to leave the profession of teaching students with special needs for an interview. Eight participants were chosen and provided with details as pertains to the interview and ensured confidentiality (see Appendix E) in the form of the Research Consent Form. The Researcher stated that the interview would be taped for interviewing purposes and transcribed at a later date. The interview of the eight participants was
conducted in group form with all respondents and Researcher seated in round table format. Each respondent was given a number by the Researcher and asked to audibly speak the number during the interview for transcribing purposes.

Question by Researcher: What do you consider as characteristics of effective Leadership?

"Effective leaders are those that allow others to grow by facilitating an environment that is nourishing and nurturing," states Teacher #8. Teacher #14 continues by saying, "effective leaders are able to do every job in the building." All present agree by murmuring in the background and the Researcher observes as each Respondent is nodding in an affirmative. Teacher #12 continues by stating, "an effective leader is able to manage the cafeteria, ensure the building is in order, teach every aspect of the curriculum, and keep appropriate order within the school. This leader realizes that he is able to all of these tasks but never attempts to actually take on the task. Instead he assures all, not by saying, but by supporting that if push came to shove, he has their back. Effective leaders are supporters. Okay I'll let someone else talk" (he laughs.). Teacher #11 interjects to add, "Effective leaders are examples for everyone in the building. This leader arrives early and leaves when the job is done. Contrary to popular belief, effective leaders do not profess to know everything there is to know about education, but often will rely on the expertise of those that are close for the areas in which they specialize. It's crazy to believe that a leader will know everything there is to know." Teacher #8 adds, "Effective leaders are present in the
Appendix F (continued)

school building and available to those that are employed or are students in that building. Effective leaders understand that the culture of the school lies in their hands and begins with culture on day one. This is the leader that is sure to express his vision and mission, but not only expresses the vision, but all ensures that all understand and are willing to work towards that vision.” The Researcher realizes that this response has caused all to think, about what is unknown to the Researcher, but the room is quiet and a query feeling is in the air that causes the Researcher to ask, “Are there any other thoughts.” They all nod, no to the question asked.

*Question by Researcher: How has the support provided by Administration discouraged you to remain as special educator?*

“The lack of support is the main reason that I have decided to leave, states Teacher #8. “Yes, Lord,” is heard by the Researcher, although she is unsure as to who made the comment. Teacher #8 continues, “I have served this school and school district for over fifteen years and I am simply tired. Every year there are promises by Coordinators and Principals that things will get better and instead, things get worse. They are requiring more and more of special educators but less and less support is available and I am tired. I thought things were different on different levels, you know middle school, high school and elementary but things seem to be the same across the district. I simply can’t take it anymore.” “I know this question was asked for the purpose of your research, but the truth of the matter is, special education is not supported. For over eight years, I have begged, literally, for computers and software,
Appendix F (continued)

I’ve asked just give me quality materials for my children, and every time it’s the same old books and broken computers. My kids need assistive technology and they don’t even receive that, and that is governed by their IEP’s and the law. Most schools I’ve worked in the leader know nothing about special education and are afraid or too intimidated to ask and that gets old too. I can appreciate you better when you simply say; I don’t know much about that, let me find out and I’ll get back to you.

Administration is not even visible for special education,” responds #10. Just out of curiosity, the Researcher asks, “How many of you are leaving due to the lack of support from Administration,” they all raise their hands. Teacher #12 states, I am going to try it somewhere else because I love teaching students with special needs, I really love them, but you don’t know how it feels to be ignored, and thrown on the back hall and given the worse of everything, year after year.” Teacher #11 states, “It’s a better situation for everyone, students and teachers, when Administration at least makes an effort to support special education, but when no effort is even made, I throw my hands up and that’s when I know enough is enough.” It’s quiet for a few seconds as the Researcher waits to see if anyone has anything else to add, and no comments are made. The Researcher says, “Is that it.” Teacher #13 says, “I think they’ve said it all.”

*Question by Researcher: What changes, if any, made to leadership would have increased the probability that you remained as a special education teacher?*

Teacher #14 begins by stating, “If the district would just hire personnel that understands are that are sensitive to the needs of special education staff. I probably
would have considered remaining if I had an administrator that would at least pretend that he’s interested in special education, or even if he’s not interested he should at least show my kids that he cares.” “That’s right,” (states Teacher #11 as she high five’s #14), “kids notice when the principal walks by them and doesn’t even say good morning, or when the administrators know the other kids by their names but does not know my students, and I have to explain why.” “I know that General Educators take the Introduction to Special Education course, but Administration should be required to enroll in courses which apply to all mild disabilities. I believe this would help Administrators by empowering them to be more knowledgeable about who we serve and what we do as special educators,” responds #6. Teacher #1 states, “actually I believe it would make a difference if the changes started at the top, getting Administration more involved in the IEP process, I think their participation should be mandatory. Yes, it’s true we make educational decisions and placement decisions for students based on psychological data, but Administration should be required to attend to take part in the Behavior Management process; that way they’ll know up front how far they can go with suspensions.” “Now that’s an idea worth sharing,” states Teacher #2. “Anything else,” says the Researcher. Every one shakes their heads no, until Teacher #2 add, “we just need better Administrators all together, we needs Administrators that have actually walked in our shoes and shared our experiences.” Teacher #3 smiles and says, “That’s an even better idea. Are you listening to all of this Ms. Green,” Mrs. Green, answers “yes, it’s all on tape.
Appendix F (continued)

Question by Researcher: How would incentives offered by Administration have impacted your decision to remain as a special educator?

Teacher #1 states, I don’t really need incentives, I need a good Administrator and support.” Teacher #2 states, I don’t either, I need a knowledgeable Administrator and support.” Teacher #3 states, I don’t need incentives.” Teacher #4 states, I don’t really need incentives as well, I need resources and support.” Teacher #5 states, I don’t need incentives.” Teacher #6 states, I don’t really need incentives, I need an Administrator that cares and are willing to work for what children need.” Teacher #6 states, I don’t need incentives.” Teacher #7 states, I don’t need incentives either, I agree with #1, I need a good Administrator and support.” Teacher #8 states, I don’t need incentives, I need a new career.” They all laugh. After hearing from all Respondents the Researcher asks if anyone needs a break after all they’d been dialoging now for a bit over an hour and a half, but they all respond no break was needed.

Question by Researcher: Why would support, or the lack thereof, by Administration have been instrumental in your decision to remain as a special educator?

Teacher #8 begins by stating, “Administration guides everything that happens within the educational environment. Everything that happens positive or negative is driven by decisions that Administration makes or refuses to make at any given time. If Administration had been more supportive I probably would have tried it again one more year, but every year things seem to be the same.” Teacher #9 states, “I agree with you,
Appendix F (continued)

if I knew that Administration was going to be more supportive, I would have hung in there for the children. I think sometimes Administration forgets that our true purpose is for the improvement of student achievement.” Teacher #10 states, “yes, I agree with you as well, if I knew that Administration was going to be more supportive, I would have stuck it out for another year at least, and I do believe that sometimes Administration forgets that our true purpose is for the improvement of student achievement.” Teacher #12 states, “Yes, the more support the longer it seems I am willing to commit, no matter about the other conditions or resources, I make due, I would have hung in there for the children.” Teacher #9 states, “I agree with you, if I knew that Administration was going to be more supportive, I would have hung in there for the children. I believe that when Administration is supportive morale of personnel is better and people will come to work regardless of how they feel.” No one else makes a comment for about twenty seconds and the Researcher decides to move on to the next interview question.

*Question by Researcher: How has the NCLB mandates for highly qualified teacher impacted your decision to leave the profession as a special educator?*

Teacher #14 begins by stating, “Oh I’ve got this one, because I have a story to tell on this issue. Recently, I think like last January, I received an email informing me to contact Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) to receive a copy of my new certificate because my old certificate was no longer valid. In my mind, I instantly thought, “I haven’t applied for a new certificate, this must be some mistake.” Curiosity
Appendix F (continued)

drove me to contact PSC only to find that I really did have a new certificate which was completed on my behalf to determine if I met “highly qualified teacher” status. Suddenly I felt really bad and depressed and I felt like my certifications and all of my degrees and preparations had been completed in vain. All of my hard work and all of the money that I’d invested in my education made me feel as if I’d wasted time in school and my major question was what was I to do now. I was then informed that I must register to take another PRAXIS exam in a core curriculum area (i.e.-language arts, mathematics, social studies, reading, or science) to assess my knowledge and determine if I am competent to teach students with exceptionalities in the classroom. This PRAXIS exam would have to be taken and passed by June 2006, needless to say, I became worried.” “Me too, that very same thing happened to me. The saddest part about this entire process is that no one seems to know the answers. PSC is not answering, the district leaders are not answering and everyone has no clue of where to turn. Many educators have expressed no desire to take another test, let alone be told that they have no place in the classroom teaching students that they love and are trained to provide appropriate accommodations and modifications. I was so angry and I still remain bitter about the topic, I am sick of NCLB,” states Teacher #8. All agree that this happened to them as well by giving one another a high five and murmuring while other respondents are talking. Teacher #13 states, “NCLB changed my entire outlook on our profession, it’s just too much.” No other responses were made as it pertains to this question.
Question by Researcher: How could Administration have supported you more as a special educator?

Teacher #12 states, I believe that Administration could have supported more by requiring general education teachers to collaborate more. After all, we are required now to teach the very same QCC’s and same curriculum.” Teacher #8 states, I believe that Administration could have supported more by requiring general education teachers to collaborate more, and providing us with the same resources as general ed. teachers.” Teacher #13 states, I believe that Administration could have supported more by visiting our classrooms at times other than evaluation and acknowledging that my children exist. Teacher #14 states, I also believe that Administration could have supported more by requiring general education teachers to collaborate more because yes, whether they realize it or not, we are required now to teach the very same QCC’s and same curriculum, we are teachers.” Teacher #11 states, “I believe that Administration could have supported more by being more visible to me and my students, by at least pretending that we exist within the school.” Teacher #8 states, “I believe what #1 said, that Administration could have supported more by requiring general education teachers to collaborate more and give us time to plan together so that all students receive the same information, that’s what increase scores.” Teacher #13 states, “I believe that Administration could have supported more by providing us with what we need to teach these children. Just one computer and a printer with proper software would have been better than nothing.” Teacher #8 states, “I believe that Administration could have
Appendix F (continued)

supported more by simply being leaders, simply facilitating an environment that says
children learn here. By letting me know through action that you care about special ed.
children too.”

Question by Researcher: What special provisions did you have to make to
become highly qualified as a special educator? How have provisions made
impacted your decision to leave as a special educator?

“I have worked by behind off taking test after test to be HQ in Language Arts
and Math, just so that I could be more marketable as a teacher. I’ve spent hundreds of
dollars on study materials and the test. So, yes, HQ requirements have impacted my
decision to leave. I am HQ in Language Arts and Math and I am leaving to teach
General Education. Now I can say, goodbye to meetings, IEP’s, old books, changing
diapers, wiping spit and all of that stuff, good bye.” All of the Respondents laugh
hilariously and that answer perks up the participants and breaks the monotony in the
room,” states Teacher #13. “I know that’s right, as hard as I have worked to become
HQ, I now realize I just may as well go teach general education where there is
obviously less stress,” says Teacher #8. Teacher #9 says, “After all of the test, and all
of the requirements, I feel hopeful that next year will be better with me teaching regular
ed. third graders, for the first time in years, I am actually excited.” “I am excited about
next year too,” says Teacher #12. Teacher #14 states, “Well I believe that we all agree
that HQ requirements have affected all of us in some way or another to leave special
education.” They all shake their heads, yes.
Question by Researcher: Why should support from Administration be required for special education teachers? How would this impact special education teacher retention?

Teacher #12 states, “If Administration were supportive, I wouldn’t even think of leaving the district and special Ed. In spite of the lack of resources, the meetings, the lack of parental support and all of these things; if Administration was supportive, I’d stick it out.” Everyone claps and I hear about three Amen’s and no other comments were provided.

The Researcher stated that they’d all get an opportunity for member checking of the transcripts. Everyone left the room and the interview was adjourned. It should be noted that the interview was made up of five African-Americans, and three Caucasians. It was also four females and four male participants for the interviewing. All of whom had expressed an intent to leave the profession.

Building Administration Interview

The Researcher began the research by soliciting volunteers of Administrators that had direct contact with Special Educators as it pertains to Annual Evaluations and daily observations. The Researcher found that the quest for Administrators that were willing to participate was extremely more difficult than anticipated. Five participants were finally chosen and provided with details as pertains to the interview and ensured confidentiality (see Appendix E) in the form of the Research Consent Form. The Researcher stated that the interview would be taped for interviewing purposes and transcribed at a later date.
Appendix F (continued)

The interview of the five participants was conducted in group form with all respondents and Researcher seated in round table format. Each respondent was given a number by the Researcher and asked to audibly speak the number during the interview for transcribing purposes.

*Question by Researcher: How have the new NCLB mandates impacted your special education teaching staff retention rates?*

Teacher #1 states, "As Instructional Leader the NCLB requirements for the Special Ed. Staff have made it extremely difficult to recruit and keep certified special educators. Many educators have difficulty acquiring a passing score on the required test and after taking the test on numerous occasions, they often will give up. I've even had many situations where the special educator will pass the test and want to teach general education. I am having a very hard time with this." Teacher #5 states, "He's right, special educators are becoming very frustrated and are in many instances refusing to spend money to take test and then return special education; I think it's frightening."

Teacher #2 states, I really don't know how NCLB is affecting retention as I only evaluate and hardly ever have the opportunity to hire. Although I do know that passing the test is a challenge and sometimes prohibits teachers from returning."

*Question by Researcher: How has the Administrative support offered impacted the retention rate of the special education staff?*

Teacher #2 states, I believe that special educators need and expect way too much. They want us at all of their meetings and they want us to come to their classes often, and things
Appendix F (continued)

that we don’t have to do for general education teachers; and when we don’t do as they expect of course they leave. Special Ed. Teachers know that they can just about go any place and find work and not look back or be weary that they’ll be out of a job. Usually when I try my best to cater to their needs they stick around and soon I can wean them off and they need much attention anymore.” Teacher #3 states, I believe that it seems that I’ve experienced the same situation with special ed. teachers, they expect way too much. There is no way we can attend all of their meetings. Special ed. teachers have said that they can just about go any place and find work.” Teacher #1 states, “As a Principal, supporting them is sometimes hard, I try my best, but it seems most times that my best isn’t good enough. I believe as fore stated that special educators need and expect too much.” Teacher #4 states, I believe that special educators need too much, period—much more than I am willing and able to give. So if that means looking for special ed. teachers every year until I find those that can work without so much stroking then that’s what I’ll do.”

Question by Researcher: Do you offer more support to special education teachers than general education teachers? Why or Why not?

“Definitely, they seem to always needs this and that, and it just doesn’t make sense to me. Sometimes I am called to the Special Education classes for issues that I believe they should handle alone. I understand having to attend the IEP meetings, but even those sometimes have nothing to do with me,” says Teacher #3. “Yes, I totally
agree,” states Teacher #1. The other three respondents let out a loud, “me too, I agree with them.”

*Question by Researcher: What incentives, if any, do you think should be offered to special education teachers?*

Teacher #5 says, “Of course as a certified special educator, I believe that classroom teachers should receive a stipend for all of the extra paperwork and meetings that are required. I think incentives for the extra work would greatly increase retention. How can we continue to expect teachers to acquire extra certification and do extra work, and not give them anything in return; I just don’t thin it’ll fly much longer.” Teacher #1 states, “I agree the district or State should provided them with an incentive for remaining as Special Educators after they perhaps receive tenure or something of that nature.” Teacher #2 says, “Yeah I agree with that. Then maybe we won’t have to offer so much extra attention and support.” Teacher #3 says, “Yeah that may be true.”

*Question by Researcher: How would changing your leadership style increase the probability that you retain highly qualified special educators?*

Teacher #1 says, “I am not sure how changing my style would increase retention of special ed. teacher because for one I am not going to change my style to suit special education staff. Now if there is a problem that is affecting my entire staff then maybe, but not for one set of teachers, no I won’t do that.” Teacher #2 sates, “I don’t think there is a problem with my leadership style that would retain or make teachers leave, I think the problem is much deeper than that; I am not willing to make adjustments to my
Appendix F (continued)

style for special education." “I am not willing to change my style of leading for retention or any other reason. I believe the way I lead is my character and I can’t just decide to change that for special ed. teachers,” says Teacher #3. Teachers #4 and #5 both look at the Researcher and shake their heads in a negative position and give no audible comment.

Question by Researcher: How have personal factors of your special education staff impacted the retention rate among the special education staff?

The Respondents ask for an explanation of personal factors. The Researcher responds that personal factors refer to age, race and gender. Teacher #1 states, “I don’t think that any of those factors have contributed to the retention of special education staff members at all. I’ve seen as many males leave as females, and as many young teachers leave as older. I have also not witnessed any more of one race leaving than the others. So I don’t believe personal factors have any affect on Special Education staff.” Teacher #2 states, “No, personal factors have nothing to do with retention of our staff I don’t think.” Teacher #3 states, “I don’t think that any of those factors have contributed to the retention of special education.” Teacher #4 states, “Nah, me either, they just know they can leave and work anywhere.” Teacher #5 states, “I agree with them.”

Question by Researcher: How should Administration be required to provide support for special education teachers which would impact teacher retention?

“Required! I am not sure I really like the word required. I don’t know if I think we should be required to focus on Special Education. I think that Administration
should be provided with more assistance from Central Office so that we can be better equipped but it should be all on school based Administration. I think Central Office Staff always remain in their little offices and they are supposed to be the experts, and we hardly see the Coordinators and we dare not call on the Director; it’s not fair that we should take all of the blame. I think areas as sensitive as Special Education should be handled by those that are trained to deal specifically with them, that could alleviate compliance issues, thus lessening frustration among teachers and school leaders,” responds #1. Teacher #2 states, “I agree, we take all of the heat, and most times we don’t have the things that teachers are asking for as far as support is concerned. We do need more help from Central Office. We have Program Assistants, but they can’t make really important decisions without contacting a Coordinator; and most times Coordinators aren’t available for emergencies.” “That’s the problem, the people that need to be supporting the teachers, aren’t available when needed,” states #5. For the first time during the interview, they all get loud and they seem passionate about this question and begin to talk among themselves. The Researcher gains their attention and asks if their ready to move forward, they all nod yes, and apologize.

*Question by Researcher: What special provisions have you made as a school leader to ensure that teachers who work to become highly qualified as a special educator remain within special education?*

Administrator #5 says, “I try to do the best I can to encourage them and reassure them of the importance of Special Education teachers and how much we need teachers
to teach children with special needs. Maybe there’s more I could do, but what?”

Administrator #3 says, “I try to encourage them too, but most times their minds are made up after they become HQ, they leave.” Administrator #4 says, “I haven’t made many provisions for this area I must admit. Administrator #2 says, “I encourage them, not that it does much good most times, but I try.” Administrator #1 says, “I try to encourage them to remain focused on children and why they decided to teach Special Ed., hoping that will work.

*Question by Researcher: How have NCLB mandates impacted the number of teachers that transfer to general education?*

“Wow NCLB is killing me. The story is always the same, why deal with paperwork and meetings, when they can teach and go home, no extras. Teachers are frustrated and are just refusing to stay in Special Education, when they can teach children the are “faster learners” and it’s stress free. Honestly, I think I’d do the same thing,” says #1. “Yeah, NCLB is taking its toll. I wouldn’t want to deal with paperwork and meetings, when I could be stress free with the same pay,” says #3. Administrator #2 states, “Teachers are frustrated from all of the new mandates and different test and are just refusing to stay in Special Education. Make sense to me.” “Me too,” says #4.

*Question by Researcher: How do you encourage special education teachers to remain on staff to increase the retention rate?*

“I try and include them on the different school committees and I try and include them to make them feel as much a part of the school as possible,” states Administrator
Appendix F (continued)

#1. Administrator #3 says, well I just try to give them praise as much as possible, I find that people like to feel appreciated and I just hope that works. What else can we do?” “I don’t think much more,” says #4. They appear discouraged by the sound of their voices and the expressions on their faces, and the room is silent.

The Researcher thanked all for participating and expressing their opinions. The Researcher stated that they’d all get an opportunity for member checking of the transcripts. Everyone left the room and the interview was adjourned. It should be noted that the interview was made up of one Principal, two Assistant Principals, one Program Assistant and the Instructional Lead teacher.

*Interview of Central Office Administration*

The Researcher began the research by soliciting volunteers of Administrators that had indirect contact with Special Educators as it pertains to compliance is district Special Education policies. Five participants were chosen and provided with details as pertains to the interview and ensured confidentiality (see Appendix E) in the form of the Research Consent Form. The Researcher stated that the interview would be taped for interviewing purposes and transcribed at a later date. The interview of the five participants was conducted in group form with all respondents and Researcher seated in round table format. Each respondent was given a number by the Researcher and asked to audibly speak the number during the interview for transcribing purposes.

Question by Researcher: How have the new NCLB mandates impacted special education teaching staff retention rates for the district?
Administrator #6 responds, "NCLB mandates are one of the most crucial issues that we face annually as far as hiring is concerned. We lose hundreds of special educators to the mandates. The teachers either refuse to take the necessary test or have trouble passing the test. This has become a thorn in the side of the district. Each year we find ourselves beginning the year with substitutes because we can’t fill the vacancies in a timely manner; the children ultimately suffer." Administrator #7 responds, "NCLB mandates are really frustrating. We lose good special educators to the mandates. She’s right, the teachers are refusing to take the necessary test or have trouble passing the test. We are competing with every district due to NCLB mandates." Administrator #10 responds, "NCLB mandates are crucial right now. The worst thing I think is that we knew long before the mandates became mandatory, and we were caught dragging our feet, and in turn we are suffering." “That’s right,” says Administrator #9. Administrator #6 sits quieting but the Researcher observes her shaking her head in agreement with the other respondents.

Question by Researcher: What Administrative support do you offer to special education staff within the district?

“I try my best to let teachers know that I am available if needed. I am accessible by e-mail, phone, or they can come to the office at anytime. Also, we ensure that every school has Program Assistants and Coordinators so that concerns can be addressed at anytime. This question has really made me think of the support that we are offering from the Central Office, I plan to think about this carefully,” states Administrator #10. “I
make myself available daily by dropping by schools that I am assigned according to
priority. It is impossible to visit every school everyday, and even when I visit I can't see
every teacher. I am accessible by e-mail, phone, or they can come to the office at
anytime, but I try to get teachers to use Program Assistants,” states Administrator #7. No
other responses are made, so the Researcher moves on.

*Question by Researcher: How could incentives impact the retention of special
education teachers?*

Administrator #8 states, “Incentives almost always encourage people to work
harder and in this case probably stay longer, although there is no guarantee. Incentives
would be excellent and would probably help us to recruit and retain good special
education teachers. We would have something to offer the teachers when we meet with
them besides mandates and new requirements. I am almost positive in saying that
stipends would increase retention.” Administrator #7 states, “Yes of course, that's almost
common sense, incentives would encourage people to work longer even when they have
test to take. Incentives would be a great way to retain good special education teachers.”
Administrator #9 says, “Yes, I am definitely all for incentives, but where can they fit
within the budget. We just don’t have the funds.”

*Question by Researcher: How have personal factors of your special education
staff impacted your retention rate among special education staff?*

Administrator #10 states, “If I am guessing correctly, personal factors are home
life, age, etc.” The Researcher states, “The personal factors refer to age, race, and
Appendix F (continued)

gender.” Administrator #8 continues by stating, “Personal factors to my knowledge had
not hurt us when it comes to retention of Special Education Staff. I’ve hardly ever
experienced a teacher stating she is leaving due to any of those factors.” “Personal
factors have not affected the retention of Special Education Staff, that I know of,” states
Administrator #8. Administrator #7 interjects, “No, we don’t have that problem, personal
factors are not an issue.”

Question by Researcher: How should Central Office Administration be
required to provide support for special education teachers which would impact
retention?

“I think that Central Office Staff should perhaps be required to meet with the
teacher at least once a month. Maybe that would help teachers to feel more supported
and could possibly have a positive impact on retention,” states Administrator #9. “I
think that Central Office Staff should perhaps be required to meet with the teachers and
Coordinators be required to visit the schools at least bi-weekly. Extra support I believe
could also help teachers to feel more supported,” states Administrator #7. “Yes, I
agree, I think that Central Office Staff should be required to meet with the teachers. I’ve
heard teacher say that we are untouchable and not accessible to them,” states
Administrator #8. “Yes, I must say that I agree with them, we should have more
personal contact with the teachers to hear their concerns and help with their needs
more,” states Administrator #6. “I think that Central Office Staff should be required to
interact with the teachers and students more to address their needs and not just be
Appendix F (continued)

visible when there is a problem or a difficult IEP; but we really don’t have time for it,”
states Administrator #9.

_question by researcher:_ What special provisions have you made as a school
leader to ensure that teachers who work to become highly qualified as a special
educator remain within special education within the district?

“There really aren’t any provisions that I can make besides trying to talk to the
teachers to encourage them that we need them. Special Education is such a critical area
and when a teacher becomes HQ I try to keep them happy,” states Administrator #6.

“There aren’t any provisions that I can make, I talk to the teachers, but I am not sure if
it works,” states Administrator #3. “There aren’t any provisions that I can make, I just
don’t know what we can do; but it’s true we are losing educators to general education,”
states Administrator #7.

_question by researcher:_ How have NCLB mandates impacted the number
of teachers that transfer to general education?

The Researcher assures the group that they’re almost done as see can see that
they are getting agitated and ready to attend to other tasks. Administrator #10 states,
“This is a problem, and I have thought long and hard on how to address that matter.
NCLB requirements for the special ed. Staff have made it difficult to keep certified
special educators. The problem us getting a passing score on the test and after re-
testing. By the time they pass and become HQ they want to teach general education.
Administrator #6 states, “That’s right, special educators are becoming very frustrated
and are in many instances refusing to spend money to take test and then return special education.” Administrator #8 states, “NCLB is affecting retention the highest degree, we need some answers on how to address this issue very quickly. Although I do know that passing the test is a challenge, teachers are also getting tired and frustrated with the whole process.” “Last question,” states the Researcher:

*How do you encourage special education teachers to remain within the district to increase the retention rate?*

“I try and include them in making decisions as it pertains to new programs and resources fro their classrooms, and I make every effort to make them feel as much a part of the districts special education program as possible,” states Administrator #7. Administrator #9 says, well I just try to give them praise, stroke their ego, people like that, What else can we do?” “I don’t think much more,” says #10.

The Researcher thanked all for participating. The Researcher stated that they’d all get an opportunity for member checking of the transcripts. Everyone left the room and the interview was adjourned. It should be noted that the interview was made up of one Director, four Coordinators.
APPENDIX G
Observations and Field Notes

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<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Setting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Administrator #3 (Special Education Teacher with Intent to Leave)</td>
<td>May 4, 2007</td>
<td>Certification Meeting</td>
<td>The teacher is seated in the meeting that being facilitated by the Special Education Director, Coordinator and several Program Assistants within the Metro Atlanta District. The teacher is exhibiting some frustration with her body language as she asks exactly what needs to be completed for her to resign. She states, “I definitely will not be returning here and no other school, I am so tired of this whole thing; just tell me what I need to do to resign.” She walks out of the session recognizable upset.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>May 4, 2007</td>
<td>Faculty Meeting</td>
<td>Some of the Special Education Teachers (Which are Respondents as well) asks questions about books and materials for students. The Assistant Principal, who is in charge of materials ignores the first question. A second special educator stands and ask the same question as it pertains to why special education students have not received books and materials. The Assistant Principal instructs the special education teacher to borrow books from the general educators or go and look in the closet and “see what you can find.”</td>
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### Observation Date Setting Comments

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<tr>
<td>Faculty Meeting</td>
<td>May 9, 2007</td>
<td>Media Center</td>
<td>Some of the Special Education Teachers (Which are Respondents as well) asks questions about books and materials for students. The Assistant Principal, who is in charge of materials ignores the first question. A second special educator stands and ask the same question as it pertains to why special education students have not received books and materials. The Assistant Principal instructs the special education teacher to borrow books from the general educators or go and look in the closet and “see what you can find.” Special education teachers are recognizably upset and state, “oh no, we want the same books as the others.” No response is given to the teachers.</td>
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| Teacher #2      | May 3, 2007| IEP Meeting   | The meeting is facilitated by the Special Education Teacher She becomes agitated at first as the general education teacher and Administrative staff are late for the meeting. The general education staff asks to leave early and the Special Education Teacher gives a firm “no.” The meeting proceeds on and the members in the room are tensed for reason unknown to the Researcher. The special education teacher and the general education teacher begin to argue back and forth concerning goals/objectives for the student. The general educator states that “you all should tell us what to do before the
Observation Date Setting Comments

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<tr>
<td>Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Meeting</td>
<td>May 15, 2007</td>
<td>Conference Room</td>
<td>The meeting is facilitated by the Special Education Teacher. She becomes agitated at first as the general education teacher and Administrative staff are late for the meeting. The general education staff asks to leave early and the Special Education Teacher gives a firm “no.” The meeting proceeds on and the members in the room are tensed for reason unknown to the Researcher. The special education teacher and the general education teacher begin to argue back and forth concerning goals/objectives for the student. The general educator states that “you all should tell us what to do before the meeting.” The special education teacher states that the teacher and the Administrative staff really need some sort of Professional development. Meeting is adjourned and all leave without saying anything else to one another pertaining to the meeting and what took place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher #8 (Special Education Teacher Intent to Certification)</td>
<td>May 4, 2007</td>
<td>Certification Meeting</td>
<td>The teacher is seated in the meeting that being facilitated by the Special Education Director, Coordinator and several Program</td>
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<td>Leave</td>
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<td>The teacher appears very calm and interested in what is being shared with all teachers in the room as it pertains to NCLB and Certification. He raises his hand to ask if he should remain in the meeting as he will not be returning next year and the meeting is irrelevant to him. He is excused</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher #5</td>
<td>May 4, 2007</td>
<td>Certification Meeting</td>
<td>The teacher is seated in the meeting that being facilitated by the Special Education Director, Coordinator and several Program Assistants within the Metro Atlanta District. The teacher is listening attentively as she is told what is needed for her to be able to teach 2007-2008 as a Special Education Teacher. She expresses that she does not understand why she needs to take two test when she is only trying to be certified in the area of Language Arts. She is noticeably frustrated with this process, shakes her head and remains seated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher #2</td>
<td>May 3, 2007</td>
<td>IEP Meeting</td>
<td>The meeting is facilitated by the Special Education Teacher She becomes agitated at first as the general education teacher and Administrative staff are late for the meeting. The general education staff asks to leave early and the Special Education Teacher gives a firm &quot;no.&quot; The meeting proceeds on and the members in the room are tensed for reason unknown to the Researcher. The special education teacher and the general</td>
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<td>education teacher begin to argue back and forth concerning goals/objectives for the student. The general educator states that “you all should tell us what to do before the meeting.” The special education teacher states that the teacher and the Administrative staff really need some sort of Professional development. Meeting is adjourned and all leave without saying anything else to one another pertaining to the meeting and what took place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>May 9, 2007</td>
<td>Hallway</td>
<td>The Principal is called to assist in the Special Education class for MOID students. He does not enter the classroom, but opts to stand in the hallway and speak to the teacher. The Principal asks what is needed but does not lend a hand to assist with the fight that is taking place within the classroom. The teacher request for his assistance, but he never goes into the classroom. The Principal gives instructions to the teacher from the hallway as to what needs to be done with the students that are involved in the fight inside the classroom. The teacher refuses and allows the students to continue to be engaged in the altercation until the resource officer is called.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher #1 (Special Education Teacher)</td>
<td>May 16, 2007</td>
<td>IEP Meeting</td>
<td>The meeting is facilitated by the Special Education Teacher. She becomes agitated at first as the general education teacher and Administrative staff are late for the meeting.</td>
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Observation | Date       | Setting         | Comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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<td>Experience</td>
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<td>The general education staff asks to leave early and the Special Education Teacher gives a firm “no.” The meeting proceeds on and the members in the room are tensed for reason unknown to the Researcher. The special education teacher and the general education teacher begin to argue back and forth concerning goals/objectives for the student. The general educator states that “you all should tell us what to do before the meeting.” The special education teacher states that the teacher and the Administrative staff really need some sort of Professional development. Meeting is adjourned and all leave without saying anything else to one another pertaining to the meeting and what took place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>May 1, 2007</td>
<td>District Meeting</td>
<td>The Coordinator serves as one of the facilitators for this District Wide Meeting for Program Assistants and Special Education Liaisons. She shares information with all attendees that the number of teachers that signed contracts for the next school year are not looking good. Some teachers that signed may not be able to return due to NCLB concerns, as explained by the Coordinator.</td>
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REFERENCES


