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Examining the Experiences of a Select Group of First Year Special Education Teachers: A Multiple Case Study Analysis

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Examining the Experiences of a Select Group of First Year Special Education Teachers:

A Multiple Case Study Analysis

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Special Education
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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my mother, Mary K. Vallice. Nothing could have been accomplished without the unconditional love, support, and prayers of my mumma. Mumma, the struggles and sacrifices you made for our family did not go unnoticed. You are the epitome of a woman, wife, mother, and friend. Not a day goes by where I don't think, "I'm so blessed to have such a wonderful mom." I love you with all of my heart. I hope I made you proud.

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ABSTRACT

The attrition rate of beginning special educators has been a constant and growing concern within the field of education (Boe & Cook, 2006, 2008; Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004; CEC, 2000; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Four to five of every ten new special education teachers leave the field within the first five years (CEC, 2000; Olivarez & Arnold, 2006) and beginning special education teachers are more likely than general education teachers to leave the field within the first five years of teaching (Boe & Cook, 2006, Boe, Cook & Sunderland, 2008; Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Those who have left the field have stated that minimal inductions, lack of administrative support, poor mentorships, and poor school climates were the main causes for their departures.

Using an exploratory case study methodology with multiple-case analysis (Yin, 2009), this study examined how quality induction service (QIS) and teacher preparation affected the experiences of nine first-year special education teachers and further examined how the participants' sense of self-efficacy and their levels of resiliency impacted their experiences. Specifically, the study tested the theory that participating in a teacher preparation program with a strong field component and receiving QIS contribute to the retention of beginning special education teachers.

Chapter One

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The field of special education continues to struggle with the critical shortage of highly qualified special education teachers for the K-12 academic setting (McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004). Some researchers have indicated this may be a result of teacher preparation programs not graduating an adequate number of special education teachers (Cegelka, 2004; Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deshler, 2000). Others have noted this shortage is due to the increasing number of beginning special education teachers leaving the field due to job dissatisfaction (Billingsley, 2004; McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004).

Beginning special education teachers are more likely than general education teachers to leave the field within the first five years of teaching (Boe & Cook, 2006; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Four to five of every ten new special education teachers leave the field within the first five years (CEC, 2000; Olivarez & Arnold, 2006) and 36.7% of the special education teachers who leave the field do so to escape teaching (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). Those who have left the field have stated that poor school climates, minimal inductions, and poor mentorships were the main causes for their departures. Others leave the field to move out of state or to become general education teachers (Boe & Cook, 2006, 2008; Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004).

Research (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Lortie, 1975; Maciejewski, 2007) indicates beginning teachers focus primarily on their own survival during their first two years of teaching. The shift from novice to experienced teacher begins in their third year. It is at this point where their primary focus transitions from themselves to student learning and achievement (Berlinger, 1988; Moir, 1999). Experienced teachers have developed the knowledge base to be able to implement data-driven instruction and research-based instructional practices within their classrooms to help increase student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Additionally, they are familiar and comfortable with individualizing instruction and meeting the diverse learning needs of their students while also managing the various classroom behaviors that are exhibited within their classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Yet, many teachers exit the field prior to achieving this level of expertise (Worthy, 2005).

Although there are mixed findings, there is some indication that teachers' years of experience contribute to positive student outcomes (Rivers & Sanders, 2002; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002). After a review of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, Rivers & Sanders (2002) determined that during a teacher's first ten years of teaching, her effectiveness increased dramatically each year. This is perhaps more significant for students with disabilities who require highly effective teachers who are able to effectively collaborate with general educators and provide the necessary supports and instructional strategies to ensure access to the general education curriculum (CEC, 2011; Connelly & Graham, 2009). Student outcomes are not the only factors impacted by the loss of teachers. Teacher attrition is costly for school districts because it results in increased spending for teacher recruitment and professional development for novice

teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000). On average, it costs school districts \$11,000 to replace each teacher who leaves their school (Graziano, 2009). According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007), teacher attrition costs the nation 7.3 billion dollars annually to recruit and prepare new teachers, as well provide them with professional development support. Thus, identifying strategies to increase retention is essential in light of increased accountability and economic challenges.

Transition to the Role of Professional

Upon graduation, the transition from teacher candidate to teacher is immediate as first-year teachers are required to perform with the same level of expertise as veteran teachers beginning with their first day on the job (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Tait, 2008). Beginning teachers are expected to assimilate into existing school cultures and be able to implement data-driven instruction. They are required to be adept at managing their classrooms and dealing with challenging student behaviors. Furthermore, they must demonstrate expertise in raising student academic outcomes at the same level as veteran teachers (Graziano, 2009). In other words, beginning teachers are evaluated using the same measures as those for veteran teachers. However, the expectations for beginning special education teachers are even greater because they are immediately responsible for monitoring a large case load of students and completing a substantial amount of paperwork such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPS) (Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deshler, 2000). With the extensive amount of time spent monitoring their case load of students and the fact that special educators spend over 10% of their work time completing administrative paperwork, special educators have expressed their frustrations with

spending less and less time in the classrooms with their students (Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deshler, 2000).

Beginning teachers have expressed difficulties with managing their increasing workload, meeting the academic needs of their diverse group of students, managing classroom behaviors, preparing students for state-wide assessments, and acquiring the necessary resources for their students (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Meister & Melnick, 2003). Beginning teachers have also expressed a poor school climate (i.e., lack of administrative support, lack of necessary instructional resources) as a hindrance in connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs with the actual reality of the school environment (Butler, 2008; Leko & Smith, 2010; Vail, 2005).

Beginning special education teachers have also expressed concerns with the ambiguity in their roles as teachers (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). The emphasis on academic achievement and access to the general education curriculum due to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001 and IDEIA (2004) have resulted in increased expectations and demands for special education teachers (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010; Gehrke & Murri, 2006). Both mandates require special education teachers to be highly qualified, which means they must be certified in special education as well as the subject area being taught (IDEIA, 2004; NCLB, 2001). Further, IDEIA mandates all students with disabilities be provided access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment. As a result, students with disabilities are increasingly being served in general education settings with special education teachers working collaboratively with general educators to deliver instruction.

Currently, 53.7% of students with disabilities spend approximately 80% of the school day in general education settings (NCES, 2009). With slightly over half of the students with disabilities spending a majority of the school day within the general education setting, there is a high need for special education teachers to serve in inclusive settings (Connelly & Graham, 2009). In other words, fewer special education teachers, especially those teaching students with mild-moderate disabilities, perform their duties in self-contained classrooms. This reality is often in conflict with beginning special education teachers' expectation that they will have their own classroom with their own students.

In addition, the use of scripted curricula may result in the belief by some teachers that they are unable to develop and design instruction as they feel necessary for their students and in keeping with what they learned in their teacher preparation programs (Ede, 2006). Further, in order to ensure high-stakes testing content is delivered in a timely manner, a large number of school districts are publishing pacing guides, which many teachers see as a mandate detailing the amount of time to be spent on instructional concepts from which they cannot deviate. Many educators view these pacing guides as a directive that will be monitored by administration; they must be on a particular page on a particular date (David, 2008).

As a result of the transitional challenges detailed above (i.e., content certification, the increased need to teach in the inclusive setting, and scripted curricula), many beginning teachers experience a disconnect between what they were taught in their teacher preparation programs, their personal belief systems regarding teaching, and what they are experiencing within their professional setting (Conderman & Stephens, 2000;

McCaffrey, 2000). These factors may be exacerbated by their levels of resiliency and sense of self-efficacy.

There are several factors that positively affect teacher retention. These include teacher preparation programs, especially those that have a linked field component (Coffey, 2010; Connelly & Graham, 2009), resiliency and self-efficacy (Gu & Day, 2007; Tait, 2008, Yost, 2006), and quality induction services which include mentorship, administrative support, positive school climate, and access to instruction resources (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Conderman & Stephens, 2000; Whitaker, 2000). Each of these will be discussed below.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation programs are charged with producing graduates who possess content and pedagogical knowledge and can demonstrate this knowledge through student performance in high-stakes state assessments (Brownell, Sindelar, & Kiely, & Danielson, 2010; Menlove, Garnes, & Salzberg, 2004). There is also the expectation that graduates possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse K-12 student population (NCATE, 2001). In order to help facilitate this, many teacher preparation programs infuse real-world contexts (i.e. field experiences) within their coursework to help bridge the gap between educational research and the actual practice of teaching. This practice allows teacher candidates to apply and connect what they have learned in their coursework within the real-world contexts of the classroom (Alvarez McHatton, et al., 2008; Connelly & Graham, 2009). These combinations of coursework and field experiences contribute to teacher longevity in the

field (Benner & Judge, 2000; Brownell, Ross, Colón, & McCallum, 2005, Graziano, 2009).

Although a great deal of attention is placed on teacher preparation programs, equally important is the context in which teacher candidates and in-service teachers do their work. Further, the process of transitioning from pre-professional to professional is fraught with challenges that also need to be addressed. The following section details the challenges experienced by beginning special education teachers.

Resiliency and Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in his/her capabilities in successfully accomplishing a task. Resiliency is closely linked with self-efficacy. It is the ability to encounter and overcome challenges in times of stress (Tait, 2008). Therefore, a highly efficacious beginning teacher will have a high level of resiliency while the beginning teacher who has a low sense of self-efficacy will possess a low level of resiliency. Research (Bobek, 2002; Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2009; Fry, 2009; Tait, 2008) indicates a beginning teacher's personal efficacy and level of resilience have significant impacts on teacher retention. A beginning teacher who possesses low levels of self-efficacy and resiliency and experiences a disconnect between what was taught in her teacher preparation program and what she is experiencing in her instructional environment may view herself as incapable of meeting the demands of the job. As a result, she may choose to leave the new environment or the profession. However, possessing a high level of self-efficacy and a strong sense of resilience can help facilitate the transition from pre-professional to professional for the beginning teacher because she

is able to adapt to her new environment and, therefore, is able to overcome the challenges and obstacles presented before her.

Addressing the challenges experienced by beginning teachers and fostering resiliency and a strong sense of self-efficacy can decrease attrition. Quality induction services (QIS) provide such supports, which, in tandem with teacher resiliency and self-efficacy, may result in increased retention of beginning special education teachers. The following section provides a brief overview of how quality induction services lead to improved retention.

Quality Induction Support

QIS is a long-term support system that is provided to beginning teachers. Figure 1 displays the components essential to QIS.

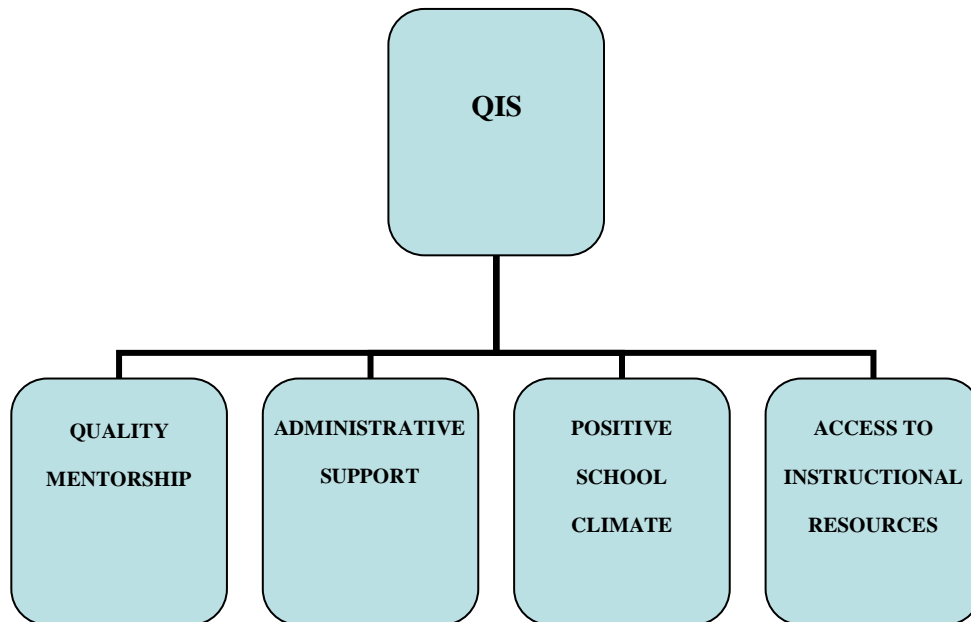


Figure 1. Components of QIS

These components consist of quality mentorship, administrative support, a positive school climate, and access to instructional resources (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). One of the major components of QIS for beginning special education

teachers is the need to provide them with quality mentors. Beginning special education teachers who have the support and guidance from quality mentors will demonstrate better results in the planning of lessons, handling discipline problems and staying in the classroom longer (Division of Teacher Education and Licensure, 2000; Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kligore, 2003; Leko & Smith, 2010). A quality mentor for a beginning special education teacher is defined as an individual who is a special educator, has extensive knowledge on curriculum and instruction, and is able to meet with the beginning special educator informally at least once a week (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; White & Mason, 2006).

Another important element of QIS is administrative support. Beginning special education teachers who have experienced successful QIS have expressed their administrators' willingness to maintain an open-door policy, lead once a month meetings with beginning teachers where problems, questions, and concerns are addressed, and are consistently visible throughout their school buildings (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Leko & Smith, 2010; Vail, 2005). This type of support contributes to a positive school climate in which communication amongst administration, faculty, and staff is valued. A positive school climate is defined as continued administrative support in decision-making and open-door policy in communicating with administration, an environment that supports collaboration amongst its faculty, and access to instructional resources to best meet the needs of students with disabilities (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Research indicates that school districts which provide QIS to their beginning teachers for at least one school year help increase teacher retention (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Carr & Evans, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Schein's cognitive redefinition theory (1996) which was influenced by Lewin's model of change (1947). This theory posits that change is a process (Figure 2) which occurs when an individual is confronted with information or specific experiences that challenge her pre-conceived ideas (disconfirmation). In response, the individual seeks out new information (cognitive redefinition) and ultimately internalizes the new information (refreezing).

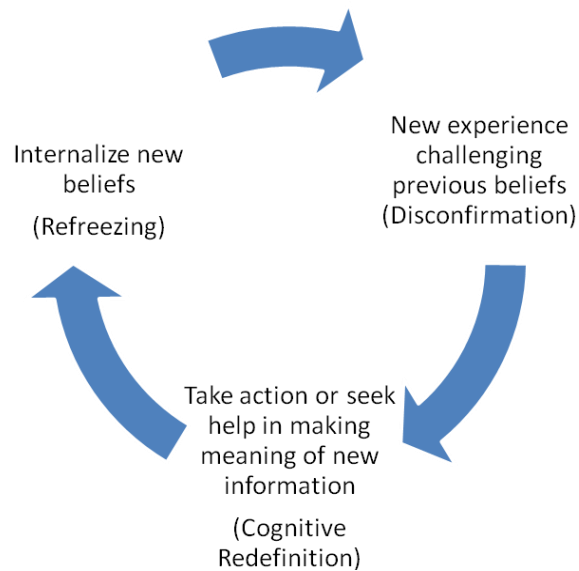


Figure 2. Change as a process

Based on Schein's cognitive redefinition theory, all beginning teachers will experience disconfirmation, which is some level of discomfort and frustration as they transition from the role of teacher candidate to teacher and experience the challenges associated with their new role. How the beginning teacher responds to this discomfort will result in either productive disequilibrium or unproductive disequilibrium (Gallagher & Stahlnecker 2002). Productive disequilibrium results when the beginning teacher acknowledges the challenges and seeks out assistance (e.g., mentor, administrative

support, independent research) in order to make sense of the new environment. She is able to internalize the new information and is able to perform as a professional.

Unproductive disequilibrium will result in the beginning teacher refusing to adjust to her new environment and may contribute to early departure from the field. QIS may foster productive disequilibrium.

In addition, the beginning teacher's learning anxiety, sense of self-efficacy, and level of resiliency may prevent her from acclimating to the new environment. According to Schein (1996), learning anxiety is the feeling of failing at a task and may prevent the beginning teacher from changing her beliefs and/or actions. A high level of learning anxiety may contribute to her possessing a low sense of self-efficacy and a low level of resilience (Tait, 2008). When the beginning teacher experiences learning anxiety she experiences self-doubt in her ability to successfully perform a task. As a result, she may choose to not perform at all. In order to engage in cognitive redefinition, the beginning teacher must overcome or reduce the level of learning anxiety. She is able to do this by seeking out assistance and information from trusted colleagues.

Once the beginning teacher has acclimated to her new environment, she now enters the third stage, refreezing. In this stage, the beginning teacher has redefined her beliefs and is implementing the changed behavior and actions within her new environment. Her change has become routine, natural, and has become ingrained with the assistance of QIS and can lead to teachers remaining in the field (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Carr & Evans, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

All beginning teachers experience disconfirmation which may affect retention. Individual self-efficacy and resiliency, along with teacher preparation, and QIS are mitigating factors that can contribute to teacher retention. The purpose of this study was to examine how QIS and teacher preparation affected the experiences of a select group of first-year special education teachers. This study further examined how their sense of self-efficacy and their levels of resiliency impacted their experiences. Specifically, the study tested the theory that participating in a teacher preparation program with a strong field component and receiving QIS contribute to the retention of beginning special education teachers.

Currently, there is extensive research specific to the experiences of beginning general education teachers but limited research describing the beginning experiences of special education teachers (Connelly & Graham, 2009; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Sindelar, Brownell, & Billingsley, 2010; White & Mason, 2006). This study contributes to the field of research by providing greater insight into the experiences of first-year special education teachers and the mitigating factors that may contribute to teacher retention. Further, by acquiring information from a select group of beginning special education teachers, this study may assist school districts in creating environments that are more conducive for their beginning special education teachers and may provide teacher preparation programs with additional information on how they may better prepare pre-service special education teachers.

Methods

The study employs an exploratory case study methodology with multiple-case analysis (Yin, 2009). Case study methodology is best suited when the researcher has very little control over events, when the focus of the study is a contemporary phenomena that is set within a real-life framework, and when the research questions are “how” or “why” (Yin, 2009). In order to direct the researcher to the scope of what is being examined, Yin recommends the development of research-based propositions. Propositions are statements acquired directly from the research that are tested throughout the study. For this study, propositions were developed based on an extensive review of the literature specific to beginning special education teaching experiences and QIS. The major common themes that arose as a result of this review were (1) Teacher Preparation; (2) Self Efficacy and Resilience; (3) Beginning Special Education Teachers’ Experiences; and (4) Quality Induction Support .

Research Questions

1. How does quality induction support (QIS) and teacher preparation affect the experiences of a select group of first-year special education teachers?

This is a broad question which will explore the following:

- a) How does their sense of self-efficacy impact their experiences as first-year special education teachers?
- b) How does their level of resiliency impact their experiences as first-year special education teachers?

Limitations and Delimitation

This study had several limitations. It was a small sample size (nine) drawn from one university and all participants graduated from the same program. I have a prior

relationship with all nine participants having served as their instructor throughout part of their undergraduate program. Possible bias was addressed by using member checks and external reviewers throughout the various stages of data analysis. Delimitations for my study include not addressing beginning special education teachers who completed alternative certification programs and the experiences of beginning general education teachers.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature pertinent to the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Special education has been and continues to be a critical shortage area. This shortage can be attributed to various factors that include both higher education and the local schools and districts. Some research indicates this shortage can be attributed to teacher preparation programs not producing enough special education teachers (Cegelka, 2004; Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deshler, 2000). However, most research indicates there are sufficient teachers but they leave the field in large numbers for a variety of reasons (Billingsley, 2004; McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004). While recruiting additional pre-service teachers is one way to address the shortage, perhaps more important is the need to identify how to retain the teachers we do have. Four to five of every ten new special education teachers leave the field within the first five years (CEC, 2000; Olivarez & Arnold, 2006) and special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general education teachers (Boe & Cook, 2006, 2008; Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004; 2006; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Beginning experiences are instrumental to retention; thus, determining factors that support teachers is crucial.

An initial review of the literature was conducted using the key words “beginning special education teacher experience.” This search revealed a substantial amount of

research specific to the experiences of beginning general education teachers (e.g., Carr & Evans, 2006; Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010; Cook, 2009; Pultorak & Barnes, 2009; Scherff, 2008; Tait, 2008) but limited research describing the experiences of beginning special education teachers (e.g., Connelly & Graham, 2009; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; White & Mason, 2006). Within this limited research four themes emerged: (1) Teacher Preparation; (2) Self Efficacy and Resilience; (3) Beginning Special Education Teachers' Experiences; and (4) Quality Induction Support. Each of these areas is discussed below.

Teacher Preparation

Research indicates teacher preparation is a factor in teacher retention (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Vasquez-Heilig, 2005; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Lutz & Hutton, 1989). Freedman and Apple (2009) conducted a study in which they reviewed the effects of a teacher preparation program at the University of California Berkeley specifically designed to prepare teacher candidates to teach in high poverty schools within urban settings. This was a longitudinal study which examined one cohort ($N=26$) of secondary English masters students over five years – two years within the program and the following three years in the field. At the end of the five years, 73% remained in teaching; 23% of the participants were at the same school where they began teaching, and 50% had transferred to other schools. Of the 27% who left teaching, 4% continued to work in urban education (i.e. curriculum planning), and 8% said they were taking a break and may return. These results indicate a high retention rate attributed to the preparation participants received through their teacher preparation program.

Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Vasquez-Heilig (2005) examined teacher effectiveness as related to student achievement. Although their study did not

specifically address retention, they none-the-less found that participants who had completed teacher preparation programs had higher retention rates than those who did not (i.e., those who had completed alternative certification programs). Lutz and Hutton (1989) conducted a similar study in which they compared the effectiveness of teachers who were prepared through traditional teacher preparation programs and those who completed alternative certification programs. Results indicate 72% of the teachers who completed traditional teacher preparation planned to remain in the field while only 40% of the teachers who were prepared through alternative certification programs planned to continue teaching. As shown in Figure 3 (Graziano, 2009), teachers who were prepared through teacher preparation programs and participated in field experiences had a significantly lower attrition rate than those beginning teachers who received no teacher preparation training.

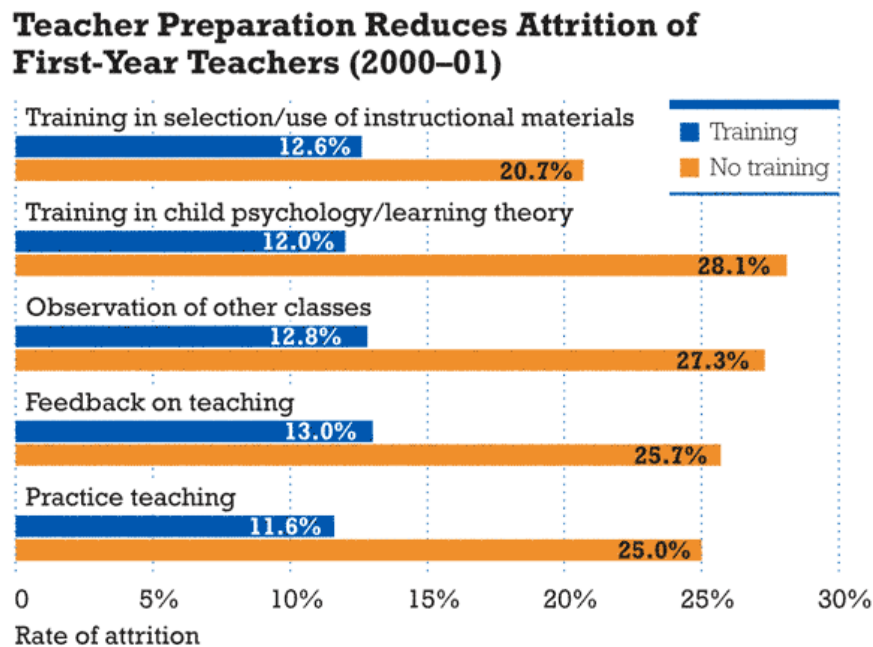


Figure 3. Teacher preparation and attrition

Research indicates that one component of teacher preparation which contributes to teacher retention is field experiences (NCES, 2010). Veteran and beginning teachers have expressed how their field experiences were considered one of the most important aspects of their teacher preparation program because it provided them with a real-world learning experience (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). In order to better prepare beginning general and special education teachers for the complex realities of schools and improve teacher retention, many teacher preparation programs are infusing field experiences within their curriculum. The purpose of the field experience is to connect the theory learned in coursework to the practice of teaching in the classroom (Coffey, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), 29% of beginning teachers who did not engage in field experiences during their teacher preparation program left the field before five years as opposed to 15% who did have field experiences.

The studies detailed above are specific to teacher preparation in general. The following section describes research pertaining to special education teacher preparation specifically and its role in the retention of special education teachers.

Special Education Teacher Preparation

Special education teacher preparation has evolved over the last 150 years (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010). In the past, special education teacher candidates were instructed in residential settings because students with disabilities were not permitted to be taught amongst students without disabilities (Winzer, 1993). However, as a result of the legal mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (formally known as Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975), students

with disabilities were granted the right to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Currently, traditional special education teacher preparation occurs primarily in the university and school settings. Though there is limited research specific to special education teacher preparation and its effects on retention, the studies that do exist indicate teacher preparation contributes to the retention of special education teachers (Burtstein, Lombardi, Czech, Smith, & Kretschmer, 2009; Connelly & Graham, 2009).

Burstein, Lombardi, Czech, Smith, and Kretschmer (2009) conducted a study examining the effectiveness of a one-year teacher preparation program provided by California State University in partnership with the Los Angeles School District. The program focused specifically on preparing teacher candidates in elementary, secondary, and special education to teach diverse students within urban settings. The program's goals were to foster a sense of community and collaboration by working collaboratively with the Los Angeles school district, engage candidates in field experiences, and provide teacher candidates with mentorship throughout the course of the program. Researchers focused particularly on the recruitment, preparation, and retention of the graduates between 1998-2004. Surveys were sent to all 523 participants; 236 responded ($N=236$). The survey assessed participants' teaching statuses and their perceptions regarding their level of preparation in teaching and used a Likert scale ranging from not satisfied (1) to highly satisfied (5). Results indicate graduates rated their overall teacher preparation experience as satisfactory with a mean of 4.3. Two hundred and twenty-four program graduates were subsequently hired by the Los Angeles School District. The mean retention rate after five years was 74%. Elementary teachers had the highest retention

rate across all years (80%), followed by special education teachers (71%), and secondary education teachers (69%). The authors contribute this high retention rate to the participants' teacher preparation program.

Similar to findings within teacher preparation, research specific to special education also suggest that field experiences contribute to teacher retention. Connelly and Graham (2009) conducted a study in which they examined the effects of field experiences lasting 10 or more weeks compared to those lasting less than 10 weeks on beginning special education teacher retention. Findings indicate the duration of the field experience affects retention. Approximately 80% of beginning special education teachers who had field experiences lasting 10 or more weeks remained in the field one year later compared to only 63% of those whose field experiences lasted less than 10 weeks.

Another factor that contributes to teacher longevity in the field is the quality of the field experience. Research indicates that participation in positive field experiences fosters a higher sense of self-efficacy and a stronger sense of resilience in pre-service and beginning teachers (Coffey, 2010; Knobloch & Whittington, 2002; Malmberg & Hagger, 2009; Yost, 2006). The following section describes research pertaining to self-efficacy, resiliency, and the role of teacher preparation.

Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and Teacher Preparation

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in his/her capabilities to successfully accomplish a task. Highly efficacious beginning teachers also possess a strong sense of resiliency (Benard, 2004; Bernshausen & Cunningham, 2001; Tait, 2008). Resiliency is the ability to encounter and overcome challenges in times of stress (Tait, 2008). According to Bandura (1994) there are four premises on which self-

efficacy can be built and strengthened: mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses. Mastery experience is considered the most beneficial in strengthening one's sense of self efficacy because it enables pre-service teachers to practice their teaching skills within the actual classroom. These opportunities allow pre-service teachers to engage in and master the responsibilities of a teacher under the guidance and tutelage of teacher educators and supervising classroom teachers. When pre-service teachers experience success within this setting, it can strengthen their sense of self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996, Malmberg & Hagger, 2009; Yost, 2006).

Social modeling enables pre-service teachers to observe how individuals (i.e., supervising teachers) manage difficult and new experiences successfully. Exposure to positive role models through field experiences helps increase the pre-service teacher's sense of self-efficacy and resiliency. Also, the more closely the pre-service teacher identifies with the model, the greater the impact on his/her sense of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000).

The third premise on which self-efficacy can be built and strengthened is social persuasion. According to Bandura (1997), the concept of social persuasion is based on the belief that all individuals can be persuaded to believe they have the skill set to be successful in a particular environment. Teacher educators who provide accolades for successful performances in coursework and the field experience setting can help increase the pre-service teacher's sense of self-efficacy and resiliency (Hoy, 2000). Specific praise based on performance in the classroom and academic performance within coursework can provide pre-service teachers with confidence and security in their

teaching abilities. This will help increase confidence levels which in turn increase levels of self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996).

The fourth premise in building self-efficacy, psychological response, requires pre-service teachers to reflect on their choice responses when faced with difficult and new experiences. Self-reflection provides all teachers with the opportunity to think critically and reflect on their teaching practices. This also allows them to reflect on their new challenges and experiences and provides them with the opportunity to problem-solve and manage their new environment resulting in an increased sense of self-efficacy (Yost, 2006). In order to better assist pre-service teachers to be reflective practitioners, Schon (1983) recommends reflecting in two stages: reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action. Reflecting-in-action refers to the ability to think critically of actions in real time. For the pre-service teacher, this means being able to think about their instructional practices and choices while they are being enacted. After the event (e.g., instruction, response to classroom disruption, etc.), pre-service teachers can reflect back on the overall experience examining behaviors and readjusting their practice. Teacher education programs which encourage their pre-service teachers to be reflective practitioners consistently throughout their program of study help increase pre-service teachers' sense of self efficacy because it assists them in becoming more effective problem-solvers (Yost, 2006).

Research indicates the collective efficacy of a school can also play an important role in facilitating the pre-service and beginning teachers' level of self efficacy. According to research (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Knobloch & Whittington, 2002; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolievette, & Benson, 2010) collective efficacy, which is a school's sense of self efficacy, can contribute to either increasing or decreasing an individual's

sense of self-efficacy and may contribute to either teacher retention or attrition. Collective efficacy is also directly linked with school climate (Knobloch & Whittington, 2002). A school with a low collective efficacy maintains the overall belief that challenges cannot be overcome and high expectations cannot be met which fosters and contributes to a poor school climate. These beliefs result in a poor school climate which can lead to a decline in a teacher's level of self efficacy. Conversely, schools with a high collective efficacy demonstrate positive school climates which help to increase the teacher's sense of self-efficacy. These schools maintain high expectations for their faculty and students and value team-work and collaboration amongst its faculty and staff (Goddard & Goddard, 2001).

Knobloch and Whittington (2002) conducted a study examining 106 pre-service and beginning teachers in order to determine if their sense of self efficacy was dependent on perceptions of support, perceptions of their teacher preparation program, and perceptions of their field experiences. A survey was administered to teacher candidates and beginning teachers who were in their first three years of teaching. All participants were prepared at the same teacher preparation program. Results indicate participants perceived their school's collective efficacy, teacher preparation, and field experiences as positive factors which contributed to their own increase in self efficacy.

Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and the Beginning Teacher

Beginning teachers, who have a high sense of self efficacy, approach challenges and new experiences with a positive attitude. They also possess high levels of confidence which enable them to better assimilate to new environments and expectations (Hoy, 2000; Pajares, 1996; Yost, 2006). Highly efficacious and resilient teachers feel secure in

consistently serving as self-advocates and have confidence that they will remain in the field of teaching for an extensive period of time (Hoy, 2000; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Tait (2008) examined levels of resilience and self-efficacy of four beginning teachers. The participants in this study possessed several common characteristics reflective of resilient and efficacious teachers; they demonstrated social competence, took advantage of opportunities, used problem-solving strategies, had the ability to rebound after a challenging experience, learned from their experiences and set goals for themselves, took care of themselves, and maintained a sense of optimism. Tait attributes these characteristics to the participants' teacher preparation programs which encouraged and emphasized collaboration and communication amongst peers and other social networks after graduation.

In a similar study, Castro, Kelly, and Shih (2010) explored if and how 15 beginning teachers working in high need areas (i.e. rural, urban, and special education) employed resilience strategies within their school settings. Results revealed all of the participants shared common challenges such as extensive paperwork, lack of instructional resources, and difficulties collaborating with other faculty members. However, the manner in which each participant approached these challenges demonstrated his/her level of resiliency. For example one participant with low sense of self-efficacy was hesitant to ask for help because of a fear of looking inadequate. In contrast, another participant spoke of the need to be tenacious and when he was unable to acquire the necessary instructional materials, he contacted the assistant superintendant. Castro, Kelly, and Shih (2010) connect the ability to seek help, problem-solve, and communicate and collaborate with others to a strong sense of resiliency.

Experiences of Beginning General Education Teachers

Teaching is one of the few professions, where novices are expected to perform at the same level of expertise as veterans (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Lortie, 1975, Tait, 2008). Beginning teachers are immediately immersed in school cultures and practices, and are expected to follow state standards and requirements. They must learn and comply with the same amount of paperwork, manage classroom behaviors, demonstrate student academic performance at the same levels as veteran teachers, teach the same number of students, follow the same schedule, develop and enhance curriculum, maintain contact with parents and other professionals while demonstrating expertise in teaching and managing students (Albrecht, Johns, Mounstevan, & Olorunda, 2009; Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). Many beginning teachers are also given the most difficult students and assignments, and placed in some of the most challenging schools (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010; McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005). Additionally, they have expressed their challenges in successfully meeting the learning needs of diverse students. It is predicted that by the year 2050, the student population comprised of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians will double (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). However, teacher demographics continue to remain unchanged, in which the predominate population of teachers are White females who come from middle class backgrounds (NCES, 2010; Valentine, 2006). As a result, teachers are required to teach a student population that is considerably different from their own. Many beginning teachers have expressed their fears and feelings of inadequacy in teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and students who come from low socioeconomic homes (Meister & Melnick, 2003). Beginning teachers have also expressed their concerns and frustrations at

having to meet expectations without being provided the necessary support. As a result, they tend to experience feelings of being overwhelmed, unsuccessful, and isolated.

These negative feelings contribute to teacher attrition (Billingsley, 2003; Leko & Smith, 2010; SPeNSE, 2002).

Experiences of Beginning Special Education Teachers

Though the expectations for all beginning teachers are complex, the responsibilities of the special education teacher are even greater. In addition to having the same responsibilities as general education teachers, special educators must understand the legal mandates and requirements specific to special education, comply with all of the necessary paperwork, manage their case load of students, monitor their students' progress, and collaborate with general educators in order to access the general education curriculum for their students (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Carter & Scruggs, 2001; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin, & Kilgore, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In the largest study conducted on beginning special education teachers ($N=1,153$), Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004), examined the participants' beginning teaching experiences specific to their working conditions, induction, and future career plans. Based on the survey results, 28.8% ($N=283$) of the beginning special education teachers reported that their workload was unmanageable and 76.1% ($N=872$) shared that their workload, including paperwork, interfered with their teaching responsibilities to a great extent. However, 51.8% ($N=598$) stated they will remain in the field, while 40.4% ($N=451$) were undecided, and 7.6% ($N=76$) said they were leaving the field as soon as possible. The beginning special education teachers who chose to stay in the field credited their decision to their positive school climate and their positive experiences in forming

supporting relationships with their fellow colleagues. Those who were undecided or had chosen to exit the field attributed their decisions to the lack of support and their schools' poor climates.

Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, Hou, and Garvan (2009) conducted a study in which they examined how classroom and school contexts can affect beginning special education teachers' experiences. Respondents consisted of first-year special education teachers. Results revealed relationships with fellow special education teachers were deemed the most supportive while relationships with their general education teachers were considered the least supportive. Thirty-seven percent of the participants stated they were experiencing significant challenges advocating for their students and communicating and collaborating with their general education colleagues. Over 60% also identified lack of time as the major issue they were experiencing during their first year of teaching, and 23% expressed challenges due to their school climate. In contrast to their general education peers, the majority of beginning special education teachers did not experience challenges in managing classroom behaviors nor did they express difficulty in meeting the academic and emotional needs of their diverse students (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Carter & Scruggs, 2001; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, Hou, and Garvan (2009) Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin, & Kilgore, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

However, those beginning special education teachers who are challenged with their workload and their multiple responsibilities relative to their role as special education teachers may be more likely to leave the teaching field than beginning general education teachers (Boe & Cook, 2006, 2008; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Many attribute their difficulties to a lack of quality induction support (QIS) in which there is limited administrative support, inadequate mentors, poor school climate, and a lack of necessary instructional resources (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Quality Induction Support

According to the literature, QIS, can be defined as various types of support provided to the beginning teacher for at least one school year (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). Such aids consist of administrative support and mentors who have experience and knowledge in special education, and access to curriculum resources for students with disabilities (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Carr & Evans, 2006; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; White & Mason, 2006). QIS also includes a positive school climate (i.e. open-door policy in communicating with administration, an environment that supports collaboration amongst its faculty), and access to instructional resources. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) conducted a study in which they examined the affects of induction on teacher retention. Using data from the 1999-2000 School and Staffing Survey (SASS), administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), they examined how the induction process affected 3,235 beginning teachers. Results indicated that 88% of the participants remained in the field after their first year of teaching as a result of their induction program. However, this study indicated that beginning special education teachers were 2½ more times to leave the leave than their general education counterparts. The beginning teachers who chose to

leave the field after one year attributed their departure to poor mentorship and school climate.

Whitaker (2000) also examined beginning special education teachers' experiences. Participants in this study expressed their frustrations with seeking help in completing paperwork and having mentors who were not special education teachers. They shared that their mentors were unable to provide guidance specific to the school's special education policies and procedures. Both studies support overall research which indicates inadequate inductions, limited administrative support, poor school climates, and ineffective mentors are significant factors contributing to teacher attrition (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Whitaker, 2000).

Kennedy and Burstein (2004) conducted a four-year longitudinal study examining the effects of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program for Special Educators (BTSA-SP) in California which began in 1999. The state of California had began the BTSA for all beginning teachers in 1992 but started an induction program specifically for special educators in order to better address their particular needs and concerns. The program is geared for first and second-year special educators and provides them with mentors who are certified in special education. Participants engage in the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST). Its purpose is to guide and encourage participants to self-reflect and self-assess through various structured activities throughout their first two years. Additionally, five professional release days are provided in which beginning teachers have the opportunity to observe experienced special educators in their classroom settings. Participants are

encouraged to attend monthly professional development workshops and are provided stipends to attend trainings or workshops they felt would develop and enhance their teaching skills. The researchers reviewed multiple data including special educators' logs, attendance in workshops and support meetings, professional day requests, and stipend request. Participants also completed a survey assessing their level of satisfaction with their induction process using a Likert scale ranging from not satisfied (1) to highly satisfied (5). Overall, beginning teachers and their mentors were highly satisfied with their induction program. Findings indicate the average mean for beginning special education teacher satisfaction ranged from 3.4 to 4.9 and the mentors' average mean ranged from 3.6 to 4.8. Further, 95% of the beginning teachers remained in the field and the researchers contribute this high retention rate to the induction process provided to them.

Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001) conducted a study examining the induction experiences of 887 beginning special education teachers. Results suggest the roles and expectations for beginning special educators was a major cause of their stress. In other words, beginning special educators were overwhelmed with excessive paperwork, lack of instructional resources, unclear roles, and the legal responsibilities associated with the field of special education. As a result, their sense of self-efficacy was weakened and they were uncertain if they would continue to remain in the field of special education. The researchers recommend school districts and administrators reevaluate the roles and expectations for their special educators in order to facilitate teacher retention.

Faculty members at Southeastern Louisiana University addressed the need to improve teacher retention by developing the Teacher Scholars Program, a program with the intention of providing intensive induction support to beginning general and special education teachers during their first year of teaching (Carr & Evans, 2006). Participants were students in the university's masters program and worked in school districts affiliated with the university. Induction was provided through mentoring by school district personnel and faculty members from the university. The school district mentors, who had a minimum of eight years of teaching experience, were responsible for up to four participants and were expected to spend six to eight hours weekly in each beginning teacher's classroom to provide critical feedback and to respond to the beginning teacher's questions and concerns. In addition, university faculty members, school district mentors, and administrators frequently met in order to ensure that the beginning teachers' needs were being met. Throughout the year, various professional seminars were conducted for the beginning teachers, as well. Over the span of seven years, 95% of the beginning teachers who participated in this program have remained in the field. This high retention rate is attributed to the quality induction support provided, as well as the support they received from their teacher preparation program.

Gehrke and McCoy (2007) examined a group of beginning special education teachers in order to discover their perceptions related to their school's induction process. All five participants took part in an induction process that was specific to special education teachers, received onsite mentoring, and were provided and/or had access to instructional resources. As a result of the building-level support they received throughout their first year of teaching, much of their focus was placed on effective teaching practices

rather than on their own survival. Four out of the five participants sought training specific to instructional practices for reading outside of school hours. In addition, all five beginning special education teachers intended to return the following school year. However, four out of the five participants described their relationships with their general education colleagues as less than supportive and described their relationship with their administrator as “less than ideal” (p.497).

Administrative support. One of the chief concerns for beginning special education teachers is the lack of administrative support (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997; Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Leko & Smith, 2010; Whitaker, 2003; Yost, 2006). Yost (2006) conducted a study examining the obstacles 13 beginning teachers faced in their school settings. Findings indicate the importance for beginning teachers to possess a strong sense of self-efficacy in order to help them overcome challenges. The importance of administrative support was also cited as instrumental in helping the beginning teachers to feel supported within their new environment. Three out of the 13 participants left their schools because they felt unsupported by their administration and experienced a poor school climate. One participant shared “[To them] special education did not exist. It didn’t apply to them at all. So we’re in the dark the whole time” (p. 71). As a result, many of the participants felt overwhelmed and frustrated with the lack of support and direction provided to them causing three of the participants to leave the school.

Beginning special education teachers also feel their administrators do not take the time to listen and respond to their questions and concerns. (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Leko & Smith, 2010). Gehrke and Murri, examined the

experiences of eight beginning special education teachers and the levels of support they received. Interviews were conducted and based on their responses and three out of the eight participants expressed less than positive relationships with their administration. One of the participants shared that his principal was not a supportive figure when it concerned his students. Another participant attributed her unexpected reassignment by her administrator as the reason for their poor relationship. She shared that she felt 'dispensable' (p. 182) and was never asked to share her thoughts or concerns about the reassignment.

On the other hand, beginning special education teachers who have experienced successful QIS have expressed their administrators' willingness to maintain an open-door policy, lead once a month meetings with beginning teachers where problems, questions, and concerns are addressed, and are consistently visible throughout their school buildings (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Leko & Smith, 2010; Vail, 2005). This support provided to beginning special education teachers also contributes to the overall school climate. In Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss's study (2001), the participants who had positive relationships with their administrators attributed this to their administrators' assistance in helping them becoming acclimated to the school district's special education policies and procedures. Their administrators also provided them with professional development opportunities pertaining to various instructional practices. Such proactive measures on behalf of administrators may prevent beginning special education teachers from feeling overwhelmed with their roles and responsibilities as a special educator and will enable them to remain in the field longer (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Leko & Smith, 2010; Vail, 2005).

Mentorship. Although there is extensive literature pertaining to mentoring and the beginning general education teacher (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Bradbury, 2010; Carr & Evans, 2006; Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Lai, 2010), there is limited research specific to mentoring and beginning special education teachers (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore, 2003; White & Mason, 2006; Whitaker, 2000). However, the research that is pertinent to both beginning special and general education teachers are all in consensus that quality mentorship is crucial for teacher retention.

Beginning teachers who were paired with a mentor in their field were 30% less likely to leave the field of teaching (Smith & Ingersol, 2004). A quality mentor for a beginning special education teacher is defined as an individual who is a special educator, is knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction, and is able to meet with the beginning special educator informally at least once a week (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; White & Mason, 2006). A beginning teacher having the support and guidance from a quality mentor demonstrates better results in the planning of lessons, handling discipline problems, and will stay in the classroom longer because she is able to receive frequent, critical feedback from her mentor through informal observations and/or meetings (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Division of Teacher Education and Licensure, 2000; Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kligore, 2003; Leko & Smith, 2010). However, research indicates many beginning special education teachers have been paired with mentors who, by definition, have not met the criteria of a quality mentor. In some cases, they have been paired with general education mentors

who lack necessary knowledge and expertise in special education (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010).

Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) examined the implementation and effectiveness of two middle schools' induction processes. Twenty-seven beginning teachers, 16 mentors, and two principals participated in the study. The majority rated their mentors positively and shared that frequent communication (i.e. via email, stopping by at the end of the school day) and their mentors' willingness to share ideas and provide feedback contributed to their positive relationship. One beginning teacher shared, "She checks on you constantly. Not that she thinks you can't do it. But she's like in your corner" (p.1010). This level of support provided beginning teachers with needed guidance and support throughout their first year of teaching.

White and Mason (2006) conducted a study over the course of two years at seven national sites. Their sample was comprised of 172 mentors and 147 new teachers. The study examined the impact of mentoring for beginning special education teachers. Participants in this study regarded quality mentors as those who made time to meet with them and who closely mirrored their teaching assignments and responsibilities such as teaching in the same building, teaching the same population of students, and teaching the same grade level. Responses from the mentors and beginning teachers indicate 98.5% of beginning teachers agreed that a mentorship program should continue within their school districts and 75.7% beginning special education teachers felt very satisfied with their roles as mentors. As a result of the support they received from their mentors, 75% of the special education teachers planned to return to their current schools and 82% of the mentors planned to continue their role as mentors the following school year.

A similar study conducted by Whitaker (2000), and discussed earlier in this chapter, examined mentor programs for 156 beginning special education teachers and determined their level of effectiveness. Findings were similar to the previous study and Whitaker concluded there was a significant relationship between effective mentor programs and teacher retention. Participants who had positive mentor experiences planned to remain in the field (64%). However, the participants who felt their mentor programs provided inadequate support had no plans of remaining in the field. A little over a quarter (27%) did not plan to teach more than five years, 8% left after their first year, and 1% left before his/her first year ended.

School climate. Another contributing factor that leads to special education teacher retention is a positive school climate. A positive school climate includes administrative support which has been discussed previously. It is also defined as an environment that supports and encourages collaboration amongst its faculty, and provides access to instructional resources to best meet the needs of students with disabilities (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). A healthy climate also contributes to a positive collective efficacy (Goddard & Goddard, 2001).

Yet, many beginning special education teachers experience challenges in collaborating and developing relationships with their general education colleagues (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009; Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, Hou, & Garvan, 2009; Kilgore & Griffin, 1998) which contributes to poor school climates and poor collective efficacy. In a pilot study conducted by Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez (2009), the authors examined how beginning special education teachers and beginning general education teachers perceived their preparation for collaboration. A

survey was administered to all 25 participants and results indicate the majority of beginning special education teachers felt inadequate when attempting to co-plan, co-teach, and access the general education curriculum for their students,. Beginning general education teachers expressed similar feelings of incompetence in co-teach settings. They also shared their difficulty in providing students with disabilities accommodations, and challenges in providing students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum. Such perceptions can result in a decrease in the beginning teacher's sense of self-efficacy and level of resiliency, as well as lead to challenges in collaborating with one another.

According to research (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009; Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009), many special education teachers believe general education teachers are reluctant to provide accommodations and modifications for their students with disabilities because many general educators believe such needs to be unnecessary. This perception can be attributed to research which indicates that many general education teachers do not individualize instruction nor do they accommodate their instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities because they do not believe the students' disabilities impact their educational performance (Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009, Cook & Cameron, 2010; Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin, & Kilgore, 2005). These actions lead to a poor school climate, as well as a poor level of collective efficacy, which can contribute to teacher attrition for beginning special education teachers.

The communication of these perceptions by many general education teachers may result in feelings of discouragement for special educators because they feel they are

unable to successfully advocate for their students. Such feelings of inadequacies contribute to the stress of effectively meeting the needs of their students (Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009; Carter & Scruggs, 2001; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). Without supportive working relationships with their general education colleagues, beginning special education teachers are left to either problem-solve on their own or choose to leave the field (Carter & Scruggs, 2001; Leko & Smith, 2010). Carter and Scruggs (2001) examined the first-year special education teaching experiences of the lead author who taught 31 students with intellectual disabilities. Carter shared her frustration and dismay at how her students were treated by her administration and general education colleagues:

She stated, “on the first day of school, one of my students, who had mental retardation and cerebral palsy, missed the bus to go home. For this she was severely reprimanded and threatened with being made to walk home. I was called in to this meeting to help ‘translate’ the conversation, due to the fact that the student was severely speech impaired. She was told repeatedly, ‘Speak up, I can’t hear you!’ (p. 102).

Carter went on to add that her students sat in a segregated area in the school cafeteria and were not permitted to leave their table and sit with the other students. Due to her students not adhering to this rule and sneaking off to sit with their friends, Carter and her students were banned from eating in the cafeteria. They were instructed to pick up their breakfast from the cafeteria and eat in their classroom. She shared that eventually her students stopped eating breakfast because they “were singled out and told to leave with their food got embarrassed and began to throw away their food... Basically

my students just stopped eating breakfast” (p. 102). Due to the difficult and challenging school climate, Carter transferred to another school.

Many teacher education preparation programs address the importance of collaboration between the general education and special education teacher through modeling and field experiences (Arthaud, Aram, Breck, Doelling, & Bushrow, 2007; Parker, Alvarez McHatton, Allen, & Rosa, 2010). Yet, what many beginning teachers face is often contrary to what they have been taught in their preparation programs which emphasizes the disconnect beginning teachers experience between their teacher education programs and the school settings they are serving and can contribute to teacher attrition (Carter & Scruggs, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Access to instructional resources. Another factor which leads many beginning special education teachers to leave the field is the lack of access to instructional resources for their students with disabilities. Many beginning special education teachers have expressed difficulty in acquiring the necessary, grade-appropriate, and relevant curriculum material for their students (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kaufhold, Alaverez, & Arnold, 2006; Leko & Smith, 2010). Kaufhold, Alaverez, and Arnold (2006) interviewed and surveyed 750 teachers across 48 school districts to determine if special education teachers were provided adequate instructional resources. Out of the 750 teachers, 228 teachers responded to the Likert scale survey using responses of “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree”. Findings indicate 90% of the participants agreed that they lacked sufficient instructional materials and participants expressed feelings of frustration and being overwhelmed at having to seek out the necessary instructional resources for their students.

Conclusion

The attrition rate of beginning special educators has been a constant and growing concern within the field of education (Boe & Cook, 2006, 2008; Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004; CEC, 2000; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In order to help foster teacher retention, teacher preparation programs, which infuse field experiences within their programs of study, can assist to better prepare special education teacher candidates to become accustomed to the complex realities of schools by providing them with opportunities to learn and practice within the actual classroom settings (Coffey, 2010, Connelly & Graham, 2009; Yost, 2006). Providing them with guided support, critical feedback, and specific praise throughout their field experiences can also have a positive impact on the teacher candidate's sense of self-efficacy and level of resilience. A high sense of self-efficacy and strong level of resilience can help them to face and overcome new challenges and experiences within their first-year of teaching because many beginning special education teachers experience significant challenges during their first year (Bobek, 2002; Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2009; Fry, 2009; Tait, 2008). However, schools which implement QIS can alleviate the stressors of beginning teaching and reduce attrition levels (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Carr & Evans, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). QIS consists of administrative support, mentorship, school climate, and access to instructional materials.

Several limitations were encountered throughout the process of reviewing and collecting the literature for this study. There is insufficient literature specific to special education teacher preparation and its effect on teacher retention and the beginning teaching experiences of special educators. The majority of literature that was gathered

contained small sample sizes which resulted in making generalizations difficult.

Therefore, this study will contribute to the field of research by providing greater insight into the experiences of first-year special education teachers and the mitigating factors that may contribute to teacher retention. By acquiring information from a select group of beginning special education teachers, this study may assist school districts in creating environments that are more conducive for their beginning special education teachers and may provide teacher preparation programs with additional information on how they may better prepare pre-service special education teachers.

Chapter three provides a detailed description of the study's methodology, data collection process, and data analysis.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how quality induction service (QIS) and teacher preparation affected the experiences of a select group of first-year special education teachers. The unit of analysis in this study was a beginning special education teacher and the case to be studied was the same individual. This study further examined how the participants' sense of self-efficacy and their levels of resiliency impacted their experiences.

This study contributes to the field of research by providing greater insight into the experiences of first year special education teachers. The results may assist school districts in creating more welcoming environments for their beginning special education teachers and will provide teacher preparation programs with additional information on how they may better prepare pre-service special education teachers.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does quality induction support (QIS) and teacher preparation affect the experiences of a select group of first-year special education teachers?

This is a broad question which explored the following:

- a) How does their sense of self-efficacy impact their experiences as a first year special education teacher?
- b) How does their level of resiliency impact their experiences as a first year special education teacher?

Historical Overview

This study employed an exploratory case study methodology with multiple-case analysis (Yin, 2009). The use of case studies began in the early 1900's in France and Chicago where it was used extensively in the fields of psychology and sociology (Tellis, 1997). Between the years of 1900-1935, The Chicago School used case studies to examine the immigration phenomenon that was occurring at the time and its effects on individuals (i.e. unemployment, poverty, diseases). Criticism within the field of sociology was growing as to the scientific rigor of case study methodology spurring a movement supported by Columbia University for inclusion of quantitative measures within case study methodology (Tellis, 1997). In the 1960's, researchers began to see the limitations of quantitative methodologies (Tellis, 1997). Many realized the limitations of quantitative methods for answering "how" and "why" questions (Strauss & Glaser, 1967, Yin, 1984) incited a renewed interest in the use of case studies as a form of research methodology (Tellis, 1997).

Yin's Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology is best suited for research questions that ask “how” or “why,” if the researcher has very little control over events, and when the focus of the study is a contemporary phenomenon that is set within a real-life framework (Yin, 2009). Yin has identified three types of case studies that may be used for research: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. The purpose of the explanatory case study is to “*explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies*” (Yin, 2009, p.19). Exploratory case studies are used to explore a particular phenomenon and descriptive case studies require a descriptive theory to be developed prior to the start of the study (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1993, Yin, 2009). The proposed study employs an exploratory case study design. Regardless of the type of case study the researcher selects, in order to conduct a case study, it is essential for the researcher to either create or test a theory.

Planning a case study entails developing research questions and providing a rationale for selecting case study as a methodology. In designing the case study, the researcher is required to (a) develop the study’s research questions; (b) create or identify the theory to be tested; (c) create propositions (if any); (d) define the unit of analysis and identify the case(s) to be studied; and (e) select the design of the case study. After developing the study’s questions, the researcher may include propositions within the study. Propositions are statements acquired directly from the research that are tested throughout the study. They are developed based on an extensive review of the literature specific to the scope of the study with the purpose of directing the researcher to the area being examined. Following the development of propositions (if applicable), the unit of analysis is determined and defined. The unit of analysis is the individual or phenomena

being studied (Yin, 2009). In order to have a rich, theoretical framework, Yin recommends selecting six to ten cases which is equivalent to conducting six to ten experiments. If all of the selected cases produce results that signify a trend, then the researcher will not need to revise the initial set of propositions, nor will she have to retest the theory. However, if a trend is not evident within the selected cases, it may be necessary for the researcher to revise the propositions and/or increase the number of cases (Yin, 2009).

Research Study

For this research study, an extensive review of the literature was undertaken to identify factors that support the attrition of beginning teachers and facilitate productive disequilibrium. These included teacher preparation programs, self efficacy, resiliency, and QIS which is comprised of administrative support, quality mentorship, positive school climate, and access to instructional resources. Propositions were developed addressing the themes. The propositions were then reviewed by a panel of experts whose scholarly expertise reside in special education teacher preparation. The propositions were revised and finalized (Table 1) based on the experts' feedback and comments (Appendix A).

Table 1

Propositions

Propositions: Beginning Special Education Teacher

Assumption: Beginning special educators require an extensive amount of support in order to remain in the field.

1. Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because
 - a. beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers.
-

-
- b. beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads (productive disequilibrium).
 - c. beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs.
-

Table 1 (Continued)

-
2. Beginning special education teachers' post-school experiences conflict with their expectations of their schools' climates.

 3. Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers especially in light of new initiatives and legislation.

 4. Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.

 5. Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the appropriate and effective accommodations.

 6. Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because:
 - a. beginning special education teachers face challenges in accessing the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities).
 - b. general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators.

 7. Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.
-

Propositions: Induction and Mentorship

Assumption: In order to help with teacher retention, quality induction support (QIS) is required for all beginning special education teachers. QIS can be defined as various types of support provided to the beginning teacher for at least one school year. Such supports consist of quality mentors (quality mentor can be defined as an individual who is a special educator, has extensive knowledge on curriculum and instruction, and has the time to meet with the beginning special educator at least once a week informally), ongoing administrative support, a healthy school climate, and access to instructional resources for beginning special education teachers.

1. QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support.
-

Table 1 (Continued)

-
2. Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by:
 - a. providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher.
 - b. having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures.
 - c. having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties.
 - d. providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration.
 - e. providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students.
-

Propositions: Teacher Preparation

Assumption: Completion of teacher preparation programs increases teacher retention.

1. Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for teachers to connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).
 2. Teacher preparation programs prepare special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.
 3. Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.
 4. Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.
 5. Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching (i.e. Skype conferences and observations).
-

Participants

Participants were first-year teachers who graduated from a special education teacher education program housed in a university in the southeastern United States. An email was sent to the most recent special education graduates requesting participation within this study. Nine out of 22 graduates responded to the email. The first participant to respond was recruited to participate in a pilot study and this individual is also one of

the cases in the study. The remaining eight to respond were purposively selected to participate in the study. The number of participants correlates with Yin's recommendations although additional participants would have been sought if contradictory results arose from the cases. The participants were all female and out of the nine, five teach in the elementary school setting; one teaches in the middle school setting; two teach in the high school setting; and one teaches students with disabilities from ages 18-22 at a vocation technical school

Data Collection

In preparation for data collection, a case study protocol was created (see Appendix B). The purpose of the protocol was to consistently direct the researcher to the scope of the study (Yin, 2009) and included an overview of the study, field procedures, case study questions, and a guide for the case study report. Data collected consist of Bandura's Teacher Self Efficacy Scale (1997), the modified Resilience Scale instrument (Neil & Dias, 2001) which was originally developed by Wagnild & Young (1993), and individual interviews. The purpose of the Teacher Self Efficacy Scale survey (see Appendix C) was to evaluate the beginning teacher's perceived level of self-efficacy and to acquire a better understanding of how these teachers felt about their current roles within their schools. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. These results provided the researcher with each participant's perceived level of self-efficacy. This instrument was administered to each participant prior to the

start of the interview. Once this instrument had been administered, the researcher then administered the Resilience Scale instrument (see Appendix D). The Resilience Scale (Neil & Dias, 2001) is a 15 item instrument which measures an individual's perceived level of resiliency.

Following the administration of the two survey instruments, the researcher conducted one interview with each participant. The purpose of the interview was to address the bridges and barriers they have experienced as beginning special education teachers and the level of QIS they received within their schools. Also, the questions addressed how their teacher preparation program prepared them for their current role as beginning special education teachers. The interviews were conducted after school hours at a location convenient for the participants. The structured interview questions correlated with the research-developed propositions and can be found in Appendix E.

Each interview lasted approximately 45-55 minutes and all interviews took place outside of school property. Participant responses were audio taped by the researcher at the time of each interview and the researcher took copious field notes, as well. Further, two levels of member checks were conducted: 1) review of interview transcripts; and 2) review of case study narratives. In both cases, participants were able to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the documents and to address any situations in need of revision. All participants confirmed that the transcripts and narratives accurately depicted their stories. This process allowed both parties to feel they were represented in a manner consistent with their experiences.

A database consisting of the researcher's notes, case study documents, interview transcriptions and analysis, and administrations of Bandura's Teacher Self Efficacy

Scales and Resiliency Scales were maintained in a secure location. The purpose of the database was to increase organization and integrity of the study, as well as its reliability. Further, having such a database allowed the researcher to maintain a chain of evidence. Maintaining a chain of evidence means that an external reviewer will be able to trace the steps of the case study from either beginning to conclusion or conclusion to beginning. Failure to maintain a database when conducting a case study is considered a limitation (Yin, 2009).

Data Analysis

There were four levels of analysis. The first analytical level required a descriptive analysis of the data collected from Bandura's Teacher Efficacy Scale and the Resiliency Scale (2001). Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being "nothing" and 9 being "a great deal" (Bandura, 1997). A score of 9 indicates a strong level of efficacy while a score of 1 signifies a deficient level of efficacy. For each participant, the mean score for all 30 items was determined. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Each item from the Resiliency Scale is measured on a 7 point scale with 1 indicating "Disagree" and 7 indicating "Agree". For each participant, the mean score for all 15 items was determined. A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias, 2001).

In the second level of analysis, the researcher reviewed the interview transcripts and determined if the participants' responses either supported or negated the propositions

using the interview rating scale which can be found in Appendix F (Duchnowski, Kutash, & Oliveira, 2004). Participant responses were matched to each proposition and rated on a scale ranging from +3 to +1 in support of the proposition; -3 to -1 in opposition to the proposition; and 0 in which the data did not support or negate the propositions. Further, the propositions were separated into three categories: 1) Beginning Special Educators, 2) Quality Induction Support, and 3) Teacher Preparation. The category of Beginning Special Educators contained 11 propositions and all propositions were specific to the experiences of beginning special education teachers. QIS consisted of six propositions and all propositions were specific to the participants' experiences with their administration, mentors, school's climate, and access to necessary instructional resources. The teacher preparation category included 5 propositions which addressed the participants' experiences within their teacher preparation program. A total score for each participant was tabulated by calculating the sum within each category (i.e. range of +33 to -33 for the category of Beginning Special Educators; range of +18 to -18 for QIS; range of +15 to -15 for Teacher Preparation).

In the third analytical level, the researcher analyzed the interview data using pattern-matching logic. When using pattern-matching logic, the researcher compared an empirical based pattern with a predicted one (Yin, 2009). In this study, the researcher compared the participants' interview responses with the research-based propositions. Having the patterns coincide strengthens the internal validity for the study. Using Appendix G as a guide, the researcher compared the participants' interview responses to the research-based propositions in order to (a) determine if there were patterns in

experiences for beginning special education teachers and (b) to build a description of the experiences of beginning special education teachers.

In the fourth and final analytical level, a cross-case synthesis was conducted. This method is recommended for multiple-case studies because this form of analysis can strengthen the validity of the study. In cross-case synthesis, word tables were created that displayed the data for each individual case (Yin, 2009). Once the word tables were created, cross-case conclusions about the study could be developed.

Pilot Study

A pilot study to test the interview protocol was conducted with the first participant who responded to the recruitment email. This individual was also one of the cases in the study. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the interview protocol in order to determine the length of time needed for the interview, to verify clarity of the questions, and to ascertain that the protocol questions had a sequential flow that facilitated the testing of the propositions. Data collected from the pilot study were also used to train the external reviewer in the use of the interview rating scale and the pattern-matching logic instrument.

The pilot study provided important information relative to the interview process and protocol. Initially, two interviews were scheduled to be conducted. The pilot interview lasted approximately 40 minutes during which time all questions were addressed. The participant (Sue) noted that the questions were clear and followed a comprehensible sequence. There were two levels of member checks implemented: 1) review of interview transcript; and 2) review of case study narrative. In both cases, Sue was able to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the documents and to address any

situations in need of revision. She confirmed that the transcript and narrative accurately depicted her story. As a result of the pilot study, the data collection method was revised to consist of one interview with the understanding that if additional time was needed to complete the interview protocol, a second interview would be scheduled.

Reliability

In order to ensure reliability throughout the data analysis, one external reviewer, who has knowledge in the area of special education teacher preparation and has been trained by the researcher using the data collected from the pilot study, rated all of the interview transcripts to determine if the interview responses either supported or negated the research-based propositions using the interview rating scale. This external reviewer also had access to Appendix H, which linked the propositions to the interview questions. The external reviewer also conducted a pattern-matching logic to compare the participants' interview responses to the propositions. In both analyses, the reviewer and researcher were required to achieve a rate of agreement $\geq 80\%$. In the case where that rate of agreement was not achieved, the external reviewer and researcher would then meet to determine discrepancies in scoring and revise based on discussion and consensus.

Reporting the Findings

Once the case study evidence was analyzed, the researcher developed the case study report using the data collected and the researcher's field notes. This report includes the four levels of data analysis and the nine case study narratives which are presented in chapter 4. Study participants were provided with the opportunity to examine their own case study for accuracy. Inaccuracies did not arise but, if they had, the researcher and

study participants would have negotiated the perceived inaccuracy so that both parties felt they were represented in a manner consistent with their experiences.

Ethics

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to the start of the research. Signed consent forms were secured prior to the collection of data. Also, member checks occurred throughout the study in which participants were provided their interview transcriptions and case study reports for review. Participants were told that if they wished to leave the study they may do so at any time. Further, participants were notified that all information provided to the researcher would remain confidential and all evidence collected would be held in a secure location at all times.

Credibility

Credibility is described as the “truth value” of a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to ensure this study to be credible, the Credibility Measures for Qualitative Research developed by Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, and Richardson (2005), was used as a guide and checklist (Table 2).

Table 2

Credibility Measures for Qualitative Research

Credibility Measures	Conducted in Study
Triangulation	Yes
Disconfirming evidence	Yes
Researcher reflexivity	Yes
Member checks	Yes
Collaborative work	No
External auditors	Yes
Peer debriefing	Yes
Audit trail	Yes
Prolonged field engagement	No
Thick, detailed description	Yes
Particularizability	No

The researcher has been advised throughout the planning and designing of the study by an external auditor, Dr. Ann Hocutt, who has significant experience in Yin's case study methodology. Additionally, the research-based propositions that were developed prior to the start of the study were reviewed by a panel of experts whose scholarly expertise resides in special education teacher preparation. Based on the experts' feedback, the propositions were revised as needed.

Further, two levels of member checking were implemented in this study. The first check occurred during the first analytical level. At this time, participants were provided

the opportunity to review their own interview transcripts for accuracy. The second member check occurred when each participant was provided the opportunity to review her case study narrative. All participants confirmed that their transcripts and narratives accurately depicted their stories. However, if discrepancies had arisen, the study participants and the researcher would have negotiated the perceived inaccuracy so that both parties felt they were represented in a manner consistent with their experiences.

Once the data had been collected, analyzed, and the case study reports had been written, a peer debriefing occurred in which a colleague, who is familiar with this phenomena of study, reviewed the analysis and reports and provided critical feedback. Utilizing the external and peer reviewers ensures investigator triangulation. This form of triangulation ensures credibility because multiple individuals review the data to acquire consistency of the data analysis. To further guarantee credibility and trustworthiness, the researcher maintained an audit trail by developing a database (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). This database contains all of the researcher's notes, case study documents, case study protocol, and interview transcriptions. The purpose of the database is to increase organization and integrity of the study, as well as its reliability. Further, having such a database allows the researcher to maintain a chain of evidence. Maintaining a chain of evidence means that an external reviewer will be able to trace the steps of the case study from either beginning to conclusion or conclusion to beginning.

Role of the Researcher

I have a prior relationship with all nine participants having served as their instructor throughout part of their undergraduate program. I also served as field supervisor for three of the participants who were participating in the para-professional program. Additionally, I was the assistant for the undergraduate special education teacher education program coordinator and have had the opportunity to be involved in the continued development and enhancement of the special education teacher preparation program. As I was in the process of developing this study, I realized that I had one significant pre-conceived assumption. I believed the results from this study would show that all participants would describe their experiences as first-year teachers as positive and successful. This assumption can be attributed to being their instructor over the course of several semesters and believing that *I* had the teaching skills to considerably impact their beginning teaching experiences. As a result, it was essential to limit biases on the part of the researcher. Possible bias was addressed by using member checks and external reviewers throughout the various stages of data analysis.

Chapter four provides a case study narrative for each participant, data analysis, and results of the study.

Chapter Four

Results and Findings

This research study employed an exploratory case study methodology with multiple-case analysis (Yin, 2009) in order to examine how quality induction support (QIS) and teacher preparation affected the experiences of a select group of first-year special education teachers. This study also examined how their sense of self-efficacy and their levels of resiliency impacted their experiences. The study tested the theory that participating in a teacher preparation program with a strong field component and receiving QIS contribute to the retention of beginning special education teachers. The nine participants selected for this study were first-year teachers who graduated from a special education teacher education program housed in a university in the southeastern United States. An email was sent to the most recent special education graduates requesting participation. Nine out of 22 graduates responded to the email. The first respondent was utilized as both the pilot study and as one of the case studies.

This chapter is presented in seven sections. I begin by providing an overview of the participants' teacher preparation program followed by a summary discussing the contextualizing information for each participant's place of employment. The third section presents the nine individual case study narratives and the fourth section reports the results from the administration of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 1997) and the Resiliency Scale (Neil & Dias, 2001). The fifth section details the findings

specific to the propositions that were tested which is followed by the results from the pattern-matching logic. The seventh, and final section, provides the results from the cross-case synthesis.

Overview of Teacher Preparation Program

All nine participants graduated from the same teacher preparation program. This program is a two-year special education teacher preparation program and students enter the program at the upper-division level after completing their general education requirements. Students are expected to complete this teacher preparation program within five semesters and are required to successfully complete three field experiences and one final internship, or student-teaching. All of the field experiences are linked to the program's coursework. Additionally, students are expected to successfully complete five critical tasks, four of which are performance-based assessments and linked to their field experiences. In addition to a traditional program, the program also had a para-professional program which supported paraprofessionals interested in becoming special education teachers. As a result of their work obligations and schedule, the majority of the field experiences were completed within their work site with the exception of one field experience, which had to be completed in a different setting, and their final internship, which was also completed in a different setting. Table 3 displays the program requirements.

Table 3

Participants' Teacher Preparation Program Requirements

Semester	Duration and Setting	Key Assessment
1	Level I Field Experience: Observation of various settings in which special education services are delivered (e.g. center school, inclusive classrooms).	Foundation exam: a cumulative exam assessing the first semester of coursework
2	Level II Field Experience: Two days a week in the elementary setting (K-5)	1. Create a behavior management plan for one student 2. Develop an individualized instruction plan in reading for one student
3	Summer session: No field experience	Summer session: no field-based key assessment
4	Level III Field Experience: Two days a week in the secondary setting (6-12)	Develop a nine-week unit plan
5	Final Internship or Student Teaching: Five days a week in an assigned setting. (Student preference is taken into account)	Demonstrate the continuous teaching cycle (Assess, Instruct, Assess)

Contextual Information

All nine participants were first-year teachers and, with the exception of two participants who worked in the same school, were hired to teach in various school settings. Five participants taught at the elementary level and one participant taught in the middle school setting. Two out of the nine participants taught in high schools, and one worked with 18-22 year old students with disabilities at a vocational technical school

which specializes in job training. In some instances a school grade is not available because either the school is new and data have yet to be reported or because it is a vocational school for adults. Further, three out of the nine participants work in Title I schools which means 75% or more of the student population receives free or reduced-priced lunches (FRPL). Three participants taught in self-contained classrooms for students with Autism. In this setting the participants spent the majority of the school day with the same group of students and were responsible for teaching all of the content areas. Also, five participants taught in co-teach settings in which each participant was partnered with a general education colleague and expected to present the instruction collaboratively. Additionally, one participant split her time between the classroom and her students' job sites (vocational technical school). Table 4 displays the contextual information for all nine participants. As Lauren was hired as an itinerant special education teacher, (i.e., she is assigned to two elementary schools located in a suburban area) demographics for both of her schools, School A and School B, have been displayed.

Table 4

Contextual Information (FLDOE, 2009)

Name	Setting	Location	School Grade	FRPL	Title I	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Indian	Multi	White	Diverse
Sue	Suburban	H.S.	N/A	65%	No	----	----	----	----	----	----	21%
Emma	Suburban/ Rural	Elem.	B	68%	No	1.38%	2.93%	18.24%	.34%	3.61%	73.49%	
Terri	Suburban/ Rural	H.S.	B	47%	No	----	----	----	----	----	----	49%
Brittany	Rural	Elem.	C	96%	Yes	.64%	6.99%	83.90%	.21%	1.48%	6.78%	
Rachel	Suburban	Middle	C	81%	Yes	1.74%	53.36%	19.09%	.54%	5.42%	19.85%	
Lauren	Suburban	Elem.	A	51%	No	3.02%	13.57%	23.98%	.60%	4.37%	54.45%	
		(A)										
Lauren	Suburban	Elem.	A	40%	No	3.05%	13.32%	24.24%	.48%	4.98%	53.93%	
		(B)										
Ava	Suburban	Elem.	A	40%	No	3.05%	13.32%	24.24%	.48%	4.98%	53.93%	
Quinn	Suburban	Elem.	C	90%	Yes	5.66%	27.67%	36.48%	0%	6.29%	23.90%	

Case Study Narratives

Case one: Sue. Sue is a White female in her late thirties who is currently employed at a high school as a special education teacher teaching students with Autism in the self-contained setting. This means Sue is the lead teacher for this classroom and teaches all of the content areas. She has two paraprofessionals (also known as instructional assistants) within her classroom who assist her with classroom management and providing instruction to her students. She has a total of six students in her class; five boys and one girl. Four out of six students are White and two students are of mixed-race. All six students have very different and diverse learning needs. Five of her students have Autism and are on the high end of the spectrum and one student is labeled as having an Intellectual Disability and Emotional/Behavioral Disorder. Sue is responsible for monitoring eight students' progress toward meeting the goals and objectives listed in their Individualized Education Programs (IEP). Additionally, Sue completed her teacher preparation program while employed as a full-time paraprofessional within the high school setting. She began her teaching career at a new high school which opened in the fall.

First-year experience. When describing her experiences as a first-year teacher, Sue exudes happiness and excitement. She is especially exuberant when describing one of her many successes this year, a club she created entitled, "Self & Friends." She describes it as a club "that puts typical kids in [the same social setting] with my kids with Autism for social inclusion." The students in this club work together to perform various forms of service throughout their school (i.e. pick up recycling, drop off newspapers to classrooms, etc.). She said she had noticed great growth in her students' communication

skills as a result of these interactions. “I think some of the successes we’ve [she and her students] had is, my students are communicating in their community a lot more. My entire classroom is out in the school constantly, teachers, staff and other students know them all by name. So, they’ve [school community] really embraced them [my students]...And the parents have noticed how much the kids are communicating at home.” This initiative has also helped Sue build positive relationships with her colleagues, in both general education and special education, “...one of the beautiful things that came out of that [club] is that some of my colleagues had me come in and do presentations for their students on Autism. And I was allowed to share what I know with them.” Although Sue had great successes as a first-year teacher, she did state that she experienced some challenges in teaching writing to her students in a manner in which they would understand. However, after speaking with her special education colleagues and mentor she was able to gather enough resources to confidently instruct her students. When asked if she is now comfortable teaching the content areas she quickly replied, “Yeah, I’m very comfortable doing it.”

When asked if she plans to return to the same school next year, Sue does not hesitate. She has been retained for the same teaching position for next year and is excited to return to her school. She attributes this excitement to the support she receives from her colleagues. As for her future plans, Sue cannot imagine not teaching. She wants to remain in the classroom, preferably at her current school, and continue providing professional development seminars to her colleagues regarding how to best meet the needs of students with Autism.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Sue prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Self-Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being "nothing," which means the participant has no influence or can do nothing to address each item and 9 being "a great deal" of influence meaning the participant is able to intervene in some significant manner to make change. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Sue achieved an overall mean score of 8.2 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.).

A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias, 2001). Sue received an overall mean score of 6.6 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support. Quality induction support (QIS) consists of various types of support provided to the beginning teacher for at least one school year. Such supports include ongoing administrative support, quality mentors, a healthy school climate, and access to instructional resources for beginning special education teachers.

Administrative support. Administrative support is defined as the administrators' willingness to maintain an open-door policy, lead once a month meetings with beginning teachers where problems, questions, and concerns are addressed, and are consistently visible throughout their school buildings. When sharing her experiences with her administration, Sue continuously smiled. "My admin[istration] is absolutely phenomenal. Anything I need or want for my kids, they make sure I have." She feels extremely supported by all members of the administration and attributes much of that to her principal. Sue's principal maintains an open door policy, is consistently visible throughout the building and, on many occasions, has had lunch with Sue and her students. "They [administration] have lunch with kids who most people shy away from because they're fearful...I tell them all the time, you have no idea how you make me feel [as a beginning special educator]." Additionally, she stated she is extremely comfortable sitting down and discussing any concerns or problems she is experiencing with her administration. Those times when she has done that, she felt that the matters were addressed and resolved promptly.

Mentorship. A quality mentor can be defined as an individual who is a special educator, has extensive knowledge on curriculum and instruction, and has the time to meet with the beginning special educator at least once a week informally. Sue's mentor is the head of the Special Education Department at her school and has been a valuable resource for her. She explained that in the beginning of the school year, they met frequently but as the school year wore on, their interactions as mentor-mentee diminished. When asked to discuss further, Sue shared that her mentor was very comfortable with Sue's skills as a teacher and even came to her for advice. "She actually forgot that I was a first-year teacher!"

School climate. A positive school climate is defined as continued administrative support in decision-making and open-door policy in communicating with administration, an environment that supports collaboration amongst its faculty, and access to instructional resources to best meet the needs of students with disabilities. When asked about her school climate, Sue's eyes lit up. She shared that since the school is new, the faculty and administration are in the process of actually creating the school's collective efficacy together. When asked to elaborate, she informed me that she and her administration have taken an active role in creating clubs and social events in which students with and without disabilities are able to interact and develop relationships with one another. She continues by saying, "I get to help the culture of our school and the community of our school be accepting [of students with disabilities]." Further, Sue has a positive relationship with her special education and general education colleagues and, by their request, has conducted professional development seminars specific to working with

students with Autism. Throughout the interview, she shared how she feels valued by her peers and could not imagine working at a different school.

Access to instructional resources. Sue stated she had experienced some difficulty accessing instructional resources for her students and, as a result, has spent approximately \$2,000 on workbooks, sensory toys, and puzzles. However, she does not attribute this lack of resources to her administration. She shared that they are very receptive to her requests, however, due to budget cuts, it was difficult for them to purchase the resources she wanted for her students. Although the administration may have had difficulty in acquiring the requested resources through financial means, Sue's principal and assistant principal have been able to provide her the materials after locating them at other schools. "If I need something, I needed elementary, first and second, third grade math and English books, the next day they were on my desk because my assistant principal's wife works at an elementary school...I mean the very, very next day, on my desk, workbooks and the actual reading books."

Teacher preparation. Sue shared how her teacher preparation program, specifically the field experience component, contributed to her success as a first year teacher. She strongly feels the field experience component within her program, especially her final internship, helped her develop into a confident, knowledgeable teacher. She shared that her supervising teacher really believed in her and provided her with beneficial and critical feedback throughout the internship experience. Additionally, she found her program's key assessments (i.e. semester-long performance-based assessments as shown in Table 3) as very critical to her growth as a special education teacher. In order to successfully complete her teacher preparation program Sue was

required to develop and implement a semester-long behavior change plan and create an individualized instructional program in the area of reading for one student within the classroom setting. Additionally she was expected to develop a nine-week unit plan and demonstrate the continuous teaching cycle (assess, instruct, assess). She explained that these performance-based assessments were beneficial because as a first-year teacher she is very comfortable with managing classroom behaviors and individualizing instruction. She adds that she sees many of her general education colleagues struggling in these areas.

When asked what she knows now that she wishes she had learned in her teacher preparation program she immediately responded, “I would like our teacher prep[aration] program to give us more for our lower end cognition [students].” She felt that her program focused primarily on teaching students with mild/moderate disabilities (i.e., specific learning and emotional behavioral disorders). But, she did share that her final internship placement, which was in an Autism unit, did help her greatly as a first year teacher.

Case two: Emma. Emma is a soft-spoken White female who appears to be in her early twenties. Mid-way into her teacher preparation program, Emma began to work as a full-time paraprofessional at an elementary school. She is currently employed as a special education teacher in an elementary school setting in a suburban/rural area. She teaches four classes; one is a co-teach reading class in which Emma is paired with a general education teacher who is certified in reading and both teachers provide instruction to their students. She then teaches three writing resource classes where she provides one-on-one instruction or small group instruction to students with specific learning disabilities. The majority of her students within her classrooms are White. In

addition, Emma is responsible for monitoring the progress and Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for 12 students. Emma teaches at a school which received a grade of “B” for the 2010-2011 school year (FLDOE, 2011). Also, the majority of the students are White and 68% of the student population is qualified to receive free and/or reduced-price lunches.

First-year experience. When Emma shared her experiences as a first-year teacher she did so with a quiet confidence. She feels proud to be working at her school because she feels valued and respected. She explained that her special education colleagues seek her out for advice regarding instructional planning and using technology in the classroom. Also, when asked to describe her classrooms she, unlike the other participants, responded using one word, “Fun.” When requested to elaborate, Emma simply stated with a big smile, “I have [teach in] a good environment, [I have] a good relationship with my students.” She attributes her happiness to the positive relationships she has developed with her general education and special education colleagues. Also, Emma believes that developing relationships with her students and her students’ parents have helped her to manage classroom behaviors and become more confident in meeting the diverse emotional and academic needs of her students.

Emma will be returning to the same school next year. When asked about returning to her current school, she shared that as long as her administration, mentor, and co-teach partner remain at the school, she is happy. She did share that her mentor will not be returning as a district-level mentor next year because she is returning to the classroom. Emma is anxious to meet and develop a relationship with her new mentor. As for her

future plans, Emma sees herself continuing to work as a special education teacher at her current school.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Emma prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of self-efficacy within their schools (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being "nothing", which means the participant has no influence and 9 being "a great deal" of influence. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Emma achieved an overall mean score of 6.8 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many

things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias, 2001). Emma received an overall mean score of 6.6 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support.

Administrative support. Emma shared that her overall relationship with her administration is positive. She attributes much of that to her principal's open-door policy. "The principal is always available if you want to talk to her whether they were scheduled [to meet] or not." Emma also shared that her principal's previous teaching background is in special education. As a result, she has been able to seek guidance directly from her principal in matters related to IEP's and special education responsibilities. The principal also provided Emma with the opportunity to observe in other classroom settings by providing a substitute teacher to cover Emma's classes.

Mentorship. As part of the school district's induction process, Emma is assigned a mentor throughout her first two years of teaching. Although her mentor is not certified in special education Emma feels that her mentor has provided her with valuable information in the areas of lesson planning and accessing the general education curriculum. When asked to elaborate, Emma explained that her mentor provided critical feedback after each classroom observation that was conducted. With this level of support, Emma felt more confident in her ability to develop and implement lessons and utilize varied strategies and instructional approaches. Emma shared that her mentor

would consistently email her instructional resources and lesson plan ideas. Further, she was readily available via email and cell phone. Emma considers her a mentor a very supportive figure.

Although Emma was pleased with her mentor, she did experience some challenges especially in finding sufficient time to meet with her. Her mentor is a district level employee responsible for providing mentorship to four beginning teachers including Emma, all of whom are employed at the same school. Emma and her mentor were able to meet face-to-face after scheduled observations and also maintained an informal communication via email and phone. While Emma feels supported by her mentor, she expressed a desire for more frequent opportunities for face-to-face meetings that did not conflict with her class schedule (e.g., after school, during planning time, etc.).

When Emma needed assistance with special education responsibilities, she was able to rely on her fellow team members within her department, as well as her administration, to assist her. She was very clear to note, “I sought help.” In other words, Emma took the initiative to seek out assistance when needed. For example, she stated, “...everywhere I went I carried a notebook...I had question after question and I would write it down and check it off after it was done [answered].” She was aware that if she did not take an active role in seeking the answers, she would experience significant challenges as a first-year special educator.

School climate. Emma describes the overall school climate as positive because she felt that she had a great deal of support from her special education and general education colleagues, as well as her administration. She shared that many of the general education teachers are willing to collaborate and work with her. Also, her co-teach

partner, a veteran teacher of 17 years, is “amazing.” Emma describes their relationship as positive because their teaching philosophies and styles complement each other and they are able to plan lessons together. She shared that her co-teach partner took more of a leadership role in the beginning of the school year because she did not want Emma to feel intimidated and wanted to her to become acclimated to the classroom environment. However, prior to doing this, she had a conversation with Emma to ensure she was fine with the idea.

Access to instructional resources. Emma has not had difficulty accessing instructional resources for her students. She attributes that to her administration and mentor and shared “if there has been anything that I was in need of I was able to talk to administration and they were able to [provide it for me].” She continued by saying that her mentor has provided her with useful instructional resources and continuously emails lesson plan ideas and instructional strategies to her.

Teacher preparation program. Emma expressed how her coursework within her teacher preparation program was beneficial because she was provided the opportunity to connect her assignments to the actual classroom through her field experiences. As a paraprofessional, Emma worked at an elementary school, primarily in a self-contained setting for students with intellectual disabilities (IND). As part of the requirements of her teacher preparation program, Emma was also expected to experience a secondary setting and chose to work in an IND self-contained classroom within the middle school setting. Her final internship placement was in a self-contained Early Exceptional Learning Program (EELP). Though Emma felt the self-contained placements were helpful, she did wish she had been able to experience a variety of settings. When asked to elaborate, she

stated that she would have preferred to have more experience within the inclusive setting. Because she was employed as a paraprofessional, she did not have the opportunity to work in settings other than the self-contained setting and was not provided the experience to participate in a co-teach setting, as many of her peers did. In retrospect, she feels having done so would have better prepared her for her current setting. However, she does add that her prior experience as a paraprofessional helped her greatly in managing her multiple roles and responsibilities as a first-year special education teacher. She feels that she had an advantage over other beginning special educators because she was aware of the expectations that are placed upon special education teachers. For example, she was fortunate to be able to participate in many IEP meetings and was provided the opportunity to develop IEP's as a paraprofessional (under the guidance of her supervisor). These experiences allowed Emma to feel more confident in her ability to complete the special education paperwork and she did not encounter many challenges with this responsibility as a first-year teacher.

As her professional experience was valuable to her, so was her teacher preparation program. Emma shared her most significant success as a first-year teacher and owed that success to her teacher preparation program. In the beginning of the year she had a male student who was repeating the second grade and was known to have significant behavior challenges and was also considered a "runner." A student who is regarded as a runner typically runs from authority and situations that he/she feels are stressful. Emma stated that many of the teachers and administration were at a loss as to how to help this student. Thinking back to her behavior management course and the linked key assessment (creating a behavior change plan), she and her special education

colleagues developed a plan for this student and “right after Christmas break that [the behavior plan] kicked in and it is working. He no longer runs...he does his work, he participates in class.”

Case three: Terri. A Hispanic woman in her mid-twenties, Terri could not contain her smile throughout the entire length of the interview. Terri is a special education teacher who works in the self-contained Autism unit in the high school setting. Her six students are predominately White and male and she has the same group of students for the entire school day. She teaches reading, math, career preparation, and functional skills. Also, Terri is responsible for monitoring the progress and Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for these same students. Terri teaches at a school which received a grade of B for the 2009-2010 school year school in which over half of the students are White and 47% of the student population is qualified to receive free and/or reduced-price lunches (FLDOE, 2009).

First-year experience. Upon sitting down with Terri, she is elated to share her experiences as a first-year teacher. When asked how she likes working at her current school she almost shouts, “I love it!” She immediately and proudly describes how her special education colleagues have been an enormous help for her throughout her first-year. She continued by saying that she overcame challenges that she encountered (i.e. paperwork questions, IEP meetings, etc.) by seeking out immediate assistance from her colleagues. Interestingly, she also credits herself. “I asked for help. I call my other teachers in the unit [special education colleagues]. I call my mentor and I send emails and I walkie-calls [calls made from a handheld receiver] until I feel comfortable...and perseverance.

As for teaching the various content areas, Terri feels extremely comfortable but she attributes much of this feeling of confidence to her special education colleagues. She shares that she and her colleagues plan lessons together via Skype™, an online video communication tool. "...all four of us teachers get together weekly and we go over what we can do [for lessons] and how we can modify it [lessons] for each of the levels of our students." Terri is happy to share that she just received a letter confirming her appointment for next year. Due to the budget cuts throughout the state of Florida, Terri was worried that her job would be terminated. But she will be returning to her current school and will be teaching in the same teaching position for the next school year. She contributes her happiness and desire to return to the same school to her mentor and the support from her special education colleagues. Terri plans to one day pursue her Masters degree in Special Education and would like to remain at her current school working as a transition specialist or working as a vocational rehabilitation teacher for students with disabilities.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Terri prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of self-efficacy within their schools (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the

most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being “nothing”, which means the participant has no influence and 9 being “a great deal” of influence. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Terri achieved an overall mean score of 6.5 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias). Terri received an overall mean score of 5.8 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support.

Administrative support. As for her principal and other building assistant principals, Terri does not have a relationship with them and states, sarcastically, “they know my name” inferring that their relationship is nonexistent. She does not seek assistance from her administration because her questions are primarily regarding special

education policies and procedures and the administration does not have a background in that area. Rather, she depends heavily on her mentor and special education team members for help and guidance.

Mentorship. Terri was assigned a mentor through her school district. Her mentor is a veteran special education teacher with significant experience teaching students with Autism and is also serving as the behavior specialist for the school. Terri shared that without her mentor she may have actually left the field. When asked what she considered most valuable about her mentor, she quickly and emphatically stated, “He’s available. He’s there’s for me.” She explained that she has cried and laughed in his office numerous times. He also provided her with constant guidance specific to behavior management strategies and the writing of IEPs. The only challenge in working with her mentor was that sometimes his busy schedule did not allow her to receive immediate assistance from him. But, she quickly reconfirmed that he was consistently available to help her and she contributes much of her survival of her first year to him.

School climate. Terri stated that the overall school climate is good. However, she does admit that she spends the majority of her day with her special education colleagues and that there is a noticeable division between the general education teachers and special education teachers at faculty meetings. “The gen ed [general education] teachers sit apart from the special education teachers.” Also, as a special education teacher, she feels left out from the general education community. However, she said she was quickly enveloped within “the ESE [Exceptional Student Education] family” and knows she’s never forgotten or lost because of her special education team. She attributes surviving her

first year to her ESE team. “[Without my team] I’d probably be under my desk in a ball crying. I would absolutely not have survived this year. Without a doubt.”

Access to instructional resources. Terri did struggle in the beginning of the year trying to access the necessary instructional resources specific to IEP development. She shared that she was unable to gain access to the IEP computer program for four months, despite her constant requests to her administration, department chair, and mentor. As a result, she spent much of her planning time and lunch breaks in the IEP file folder room manually searching for her students’ data. Terri said that though the problem was eventually addressed, she felt as if she was “getting the run-around” and was extremely frustrated and overwhelmed with the situation. However, she is quick to note that aside from this problem, her overall experiences in acquiring instructional resources and materials have been positive.

Teacher preparation program. Terri indicated her teacher preparation program prepared her well to become a special education teacher. Terri stated that the field experience components were extremely beneficial in that they helped her to observe and teach a diverse population of students and made her more aware of the positive and challenging aspects of working in schools. She added that her coursework helped her with behavior management strategies and administering various assessments to her diverse learners. However, she made several suggestions for her teacher preparation program. She wished she was provided more information in working with students with low incidence disabilities. Additionally, in order to tackle the overwhelming paperwork requirements, she recommends providing organizational and record-keeping strategies to better help prepare the beginning special education teacher.

Case four: Brittany. A soft-spoken woman in her early twenties, Brittany is a White female who is currently working in an elementary school in a self-contained setting for students with Autism. Additionally, she is in the process of obtaining her Masters degree in Special Education at the same university where she completed her teacher preparation program. As a special education teacher, she works with the same six students throughout the entire school day (four Hispanic students and two White students) and is responsible for teaching all of the content areas. Also, Brittany is responsible for monitoring the progress and IEP's for her six students. Brittany teaches at a school which received a grade of "C" for the 2010-2011 school year (FLDOE, 2011). Further, her school is a Title I school with 96% of the student population eligible to receive free and/or reduced-price lunch.

First-year experience. Brittany shared the student population at her school is predominately Hispanic and in order to better communicate with her students' parents, many of whom are migrant farmers, she is relearning Spanish. When asked if she considered that as a challenge, Brittany quickly replied, "No. It's my job to connect to my students and their families." Her experiences are similar to Sue's experience as a first-year in that she is working at a brand new unit designed for students with Autism and has taken initiative in teaching her general education colleagues how to best teach her students. In order for her students to gain more mastery of the various contents, she has met with several content teachers at her school and shared instructional and behavioral strategies that worked best for her students. Then she "talked to them about if it was possible to do this [include her students within their classrooms] and they were more than welcoming to take my students in this [inclusive] setting and they even got them their

own desks with a name tag like every other kid.” She continued by saying that all of her general education colleagues have been receptive in working with her students. But she did preface it by saying, “I taught them these are the behaviors my kids might have and [I taught them] how to react to that [behaviors]. Brittany reflected on her experiences and explained if she had not taken the first step to contact her general education colleagues they most likely would not have approached her because of their possible concerns and fears in teaching students with disabilities. But in reaching out to the other teachers, she believes she has developed several positive relationships with her general education colleagues and she has witnessed her students’ communication skills improve as a result of this social interaction with their classmates who do not have disabilities. Also, her colleagues have thanked her for helping them learn more about her students and “...they went beyond to ask me for extra resources to help my kids while they were in there [inclusive classrooms].

Despite her many successes, Brittany did share that her biggest challenge was teaching the subject of writing to her students. “Writing is not my most confident area because I am not great with spelling and stuff like that.” But she explains that she has sought continued assistance from her mentor and special education colleagues and they have provided her with helpful instructional materials and resources in this area. She did share that her favorite subject to teach is science because “I like the hands-on experiences.” Brittany was very happy to share that she will be returning to the same school and continuing to work as teacher for students with Autism next year. She is excited and has already begun to think about lesson preparations for the next school year.

Her long-term goal is to remain at her current school as a special education teacher working with students with Autism.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Brittany prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of self-efficacy within their schools (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being "nothing", which means the participant has no influence and 9 being "a great deal" of influence. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Brittany achieved an overall mean score of 5.9 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many

things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline.. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias, 2001). Brittany received an overall mean score of 6.3 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support.

Administrative support. Brittany described her overall experiences with her administration as very supportive. This is her principal's first year at the school, and Brittany has not had many opportunities to meet with her. Even so, she is still comfortable with her administration. She feels that her administration maintains an open-door policy and is comfortable in seeking their assistance and/or advice. "My administration is pretty supportive of everything I do... I really don't see her [principal] much or my kids really don't see her much either. But she has been very supportive of everything I have been trying to do and trying to get me the resources I need when I need them." Brittany has had many interactions with her assistant principal and is pleased with their positive relationship. However, she did state that her administration is not knowledgeable about the field of Autism and therefore when she requires guidance in this area she immediately goes to her special education colleagues for assistance.

Mentorship. Brittany is participating in the district's two-year mentor program and was provided with a mentor who is certified in special education. She has found her mentor to be extremely supportive and shared that her mentor has assisted her with lesson planning and assessment. The only challenge Brittany has experienced in working with

her mentor has been finding time to meet. Her mentor is responsible for providing assistance and support to three other beginning teachers within Brittany's school. As a result, due to her mentor's schedule, Brittany and her mentor usually meet during Brittany's class time which forces her to leave her classroom. She would prefer to meet with her mentor either before or after school but understands that it is a challenge for her mentor. Aside from her designated mentor, Brittany also seeks assistance from a special education colleague. She and this colleague speak every day and she has helped Brittany immensely throughout her first year of teaching.

School climate. Brittany smiles when asked about her school's climate expressing that her school has a very positive climate and she has developed great relationships with her special education and general education colleagues. She was quick to point out that after speaking with one of the science teachers at her school, she and her students were able to participate in the lab experiences with this particular science teacher's students. Brittany also shared that she collaborates with most of the general education teachers and they are very receptive to have her students in their classes.

Access to instructional resources. Brittany has spent \$600.00 out of pocket to purchase instructional resources for her students. She stated that in the beginning of the school year she had to create many of her resources because the materials had not yet been delivered to the school since her unit for students with Autism was new. However, "after that, access to the curriculum has gone pretty well. I have pretty much had everything I needed or found a way to borrow things that I need for the time frame."

Teacher preparation program. Brittany shared that her final internship provided her with a multitude of experiences with diverse populations. As a result, she is

confident in working with her current population of students. She also stated that her various field experiences enabled her to apply problem-solving strategies within the classroom setting and helped her become confident in seeking assistance and collaborating with others. Also, Brittany attributes her ability to teach the general education content to her second field experience in which she was paired with an elementary education pre-service teacher. She and her partner were required to co-teach throughout this particular practicum and she found this experience to be extremely beneficial. As a result, she began her first-year confident in her ability to teach the various academic areas.

When asked if she had any recommendations for her teacher preparation program, she wishes her instructors provided her with information on how to prepare one's classroom for the start of the school year and ideas for ice-breakers and team building activities for the first week of school. "I didn't know where to start." Also, Brittany said it would be beneficial if the graduates were provided access to a graduate assistant whose only responsibility was connecting and communicating with the beginning teachers in the field. However, she did share that she knew her instructors would provide assistance if contacted and she did feel connected with her teacher preparation program because she is currently in the process of completing her Masters degree in the same department.

Case five: Rachel. Rachel is a gregarious, outspoken White female in her early twenties. She is currently working as a special education teacher in an elementary school. She teaches six classes; three within the co-teach setting and three in the self-contained setting. She teaches primarily science but also teaches one period of math with her co-teach partner. Her students are predominately African-American males and she is

responsible for monitoring the progress and IEP's for 25 students. Rachel teaches at a school which received a grade of "C" for the 2010-2011 school year (FLDOE, 2011). Further, her school is a Title I school in which the majority of the students are diverse and 81% of the student population is eligible to receive free and/or reduced-price lunches.

First-year experience. It is apparent Rachel is a teacher who is committed to her students. She came to the interview sweaty and dressed in shorts and a T-shirt with the logo of her teacher preparation program emblazoned on the back. She immediately stated that her current attire was due to a rousing game of kickball with her students. "They wanted me to be there so I couldn't say no." She then quickly states (prior to the start of the audio recording), "I love this school! Ok, ask away because I'm so excited to share." When asked why she loved her school she stated that she felt valued and respected. "A lot of teachers come to me [for advice]. They consider me a resource." She continued by sharing that her general education and special education colleagues come to her seeking advice on behavior management strategies and working with diverse students. Her advice to her peers is to "get to know your students. That's the only way you can reach them." Her confidence and assistance has helped her to develop positive relationships with her colleagues as well as with her students. Her mantra "get to know your students" has helped her greatly in a school with a population very different from her own upper-middle class background. She does not feel that she experienced challenges in meeting the diverse needs of her students. Rather, she feels she avoided the problems that other beginning teachers faced when presented with a diverse group of students by simply "talking to them." However, she did experience difficulty in the beginning of the school year teaching the subject of writing and attributes that to her own difficulties with

writing. She sought assistance and resources from her colleagues and mentors and now feels more confident in teaching this content area.

Rachel is ecstatic that she will be returning for the same position at her current school for the next school year. Rachel plans to one day obtain a Masters degree specializing in behavior. She sees herself eventually serving as a behavior specialist or ESE specialist because she loves paperwork and developing IEP's. She plans to remain at her current school as long as her principal is there, too.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Rachel prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of self-efficacy within their schools (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being "nothing", which means the participant has no influence and 9 being "a great deal" of influence. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-

efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Rachel achieved an overall mean score of 7.0 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline.. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias). Rachel received an overall mean score of 6.5 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support.

Administrative support. Rachel beams when asked to describe her relationship with her administration. She shares that she has met with her principal on many occasions (informal and formal) and has found all of the meetings to be beneficial and productive. She continued by saying that her administration maintains an open-door policy and she felt extremely comfortable in seeking their advice. Rachel attributed the school's positive climate to the administration. "I would tell any first-year teacher to work here! He [principal] loves new teachers! He wants fresh, energized teachers to work at his school." Her administration is consistently visible on campus and as a result she is able to have frequent informal meetings with her principal throughout the school day. Additionally, Rachel was recommended by her principal to attend training for the AVID

(Advancement Via Individual Determination) Program which will be funded by the school this summer.

Mentorship. Rachel was provided with a mentor who is certified in special education and with whom she has met with three times a week. Her mentor provided her with feedback specific to lesson planning and classroom instruction. She found her assistance extremely beneficial and regards her more as a friend now. Rachel added that aside from her mentor, she is also able to seek guidance from her special education and general education colleagues. “I work with a phenomenal group of teachers.”

School climate. When asked to describe her role as a special education teacher, Rachel only had two words to say, “very respected.” She attributes much of this feeling to her school’s overall positive climate. Her administration has set the school’s tone by encouraging and supporting collaboration amongst its teachers and providing opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. Her only challenges have been in planning lessons with her co-teach partners and that is a result of not being assigned the same planning periods. However, since her co-teach partners are very receptive to collaboration, they have managed to find other ways (i.e. phone calls, emails) to plan together.

Access to instructional resources. Rachel has not had any challenges in acquiring the necessary instructional resources for her students. She shared that when she did need certain materials her administration was very receptive in obtaining them for her.

Teacher Preparation Program. Prior to beginning her teacher education program, Rachel had envisioned herself teaching in a therapeutic unit at a “beautiful A/B+ elementary school.” Growing up in an upper-middle class family and attending a

private school for much of her schooling, Rachel never imagined to be working at a highly-diverse school where 81% of the students receive free and reduced lunch. Now, she cannot imagine working anywhere else and she attributes much of her change of heart to the QIS she received as well as her teacher preparation program. She shared that she learned the most about teaching through her field experiences where it was mostly “on-the-job” training. She continued by saying that her field experiences provided her with the opportunity to work with diverse students and, as a result, she learned various instructional strategies to best meet her students’ academic and emotional needs. She also added that her instructors presented her with the realities of teaching throughout her teacher preparation program and therefore there were no surprises. She said her instructors told her to “do what it takes to make it work” and, as a result, “right from the gate, I tried to make it work.” For example, in the beginning of the school year, she noticed that a few of her students came to class irritable and fatigued in the morning and, as a result, many acted out and disrupted the classrooms. Rachel shared that during these times she recalled the words of one of her professors who told her classmates to “get to know your students. Talk to them. Their behaviors are caused by something. Find out.” After talking to her students, she learned that some were not getting enough sleep because they were caring for their younger siblings while their mothers worked at night. Some were hungry because their bus arrived late to school and they were unable to get breakfast from the school cafeteria. Some were more irritable in the winter months than the warm months because they were not clothed in winter clothes. As a result, Rachel immediately changed her instructional lessons and strategies by having more interactive, hands-on lessons in the early school hours and she made sure to have snacks for her

students who were hungry. Also, she had set up a clothes closet which was filled with sweatshirts and jackets that she had brought from home. When she saw that one of her students was not dressed for the weather, she would give him/her something warm from the closet. She noticed that the little things that many people perhaps took for granted significantly impacted the learning of her students.

Case six: Tina. Tina is a jovial and sociable White woman who appears to be in her early to mid fifties. She is currently employed as a special education teacher at a vocational technical school for students with disabilities from ages 18-22. She was initially hired at her current school eight years ago as a full-time paraprofessional. This is her first year as a teacher at this school and she is currently responsible for monitoring the progress of 23 students who are predominately Caucasian. She teaches six classes; three periods are self-contained classes and the remaining three classes are taught at on-the-job training sites.

First-year experience. Tina's role as a special educator differs from the other participants in this study in that she works with students who have disabilities between the age ranges of 18-22. She teaches some content areas but her primary focus is teaching life skills (i.e. managing a checkbook, paying rent for housing, skills to maintain a job). Additionally, Tina's position is also new to the district and was created in order to address the significant reading and math challenges experienced by the students at her school. As a result, the biggest challenge she experienced this year was developing the curriculum herself as, when she was hired, no specific curriculum was provided to her by her administration or district because the position was new. When asked how she overcame this challenge, Tina stated, at first, she had no idea where to even begin.

However, as she talked to her special education colleagues and recalled her field experiences she realized how assessments could play an important role in this situation. In order to learn more about her students' needs, she administered various assessments in the areas of reading, writing, and math. She then developed her lessons based on the data collected from her students. For example, from the data, she learned that the majority of her students were unable to complete basic math (addition and subtraction) and knew that having such skills would be necessary for them at their assigned job sites. She then tailored her instruction to meet the needs of her students. However, she admitted that having a specified curriculum at the beginning of the school year would have been less stressful for her. Yet, despite this challenge, Tina stated, "You know, I kind of like that flying by the seat of your pants feelings some days."

Tina cannot imagine working anywhere else and will be returning for the same position next year. She enthusiastically shares with me that she is currently collecting instructional resources and ideas for the next school year. She's looking forward to summer vacation and for the first time in her professional career, she is not afraid for the summer to be over. She is already excited about next year. Tina sees herself continuing to work at her current school working with students from 18-22.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Tina prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of self-

efficacy within their schools (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being “nothing”, which means the participant has no influence and 9 being “a great deal” of influence. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy 2000). Tina achieved an overall mean score of 6.6 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline.. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias). Tina received an overall mean score of 6.5 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support.

Administrative support. Tina shared that her overall relationship with her administration has been positive though she does not seek assistance or guidance from her

principal or assistant principals. She did state that there were a few difficult meetings with parents who did not feel that their children's needs were being met and each time this occurred she felt supported by her administration. However, she did share that when the beginning teachers collectively asked to form a weekly group mentoring session her principal was not immediately receptive and was actually hesitant. Eventually, her principal agreed but required them to document each meeting.

Mentorship. Tina was provided with a mentor who was certified in special education but who has not been in the classroom for several years. Though Tina considered her to be "a lovely woman" she did not consider her to be helpful when seeking guidance on learning strategies and special education paperwork and procedures. As a result, she relied heavily on her colleague who was a fourth-year special education teacher and who taught in the adjacent classroom. It was this colleague who requested permission from the principal to develop weekly beginning teacher meetings and, during these sessions, all participants shared their concerns and questions related to their teaching experience. This had been extremely beneficial to Tina and she had been able to learn of new instructional strategies and resources. In addition, she was given the opportunity to problem-solve with her colleagues and considers this group as very helpful to her successful first-year of teaching as a special educator.

School climate. When asked to describe her school's climate, Tina immediately states that it is positive. However, she does share that prior to being hired as a teacher, she had been a part of this school for eight years. She believes she was already acclimated to her school's culture and therefore did not experience the challenges that

some of her classmates may have experienced as first-year teachers. “I transitioned from IA [Instructional Assistant] to teacher very easily.”

Access to instructional resources. Tina shared that she has had no trouble accessing the necessary instructional resources and materials for her students. “They [administration] did really bend over backwards to get me the resources that I needed.”

Teacher preparation program. Tina shares that the field experience component of her teacher preparation program greatly contributed to her development as a special education teacher. Three out of her four required field experience components were spent at her current school where she was employed as a paraprofessional. However, in the semester prior to graduation, she did spend one hour every day for the length of one semester at an elementary school and her final internship was spent teaching various levels of math at the high school level. She contributes her confidence level to these field experiences and the critical feedback she received from her supervising teachers. Additionally, she stated that teaching was everything she expected. When asked to elaborate, she stated that her teacher preparation program presented her with the realistic expectations of a special educator. She was fully aware that her position as a special education teacher would require an extensive amount of time and work.

Case seven: Lauren. Lauren is a soft-spoken, confident, Hispanic woman in her late twenties who was hired as an itinerant special education teacher; (i.e., she is assigned to two elementary schools located in a suburban area). She spends the morning at one elementary school (School A) where she teaches three classes: one co-teach reading class and two resource classes. In both of her resource classes she provides small group instruction in the areas of reading and writing to students with Autism and Specific

Learning Disabilities. All of her students are White. She then travels one mile to the second school (School B) where she also teaches three classes to the same population of students. She co-teaches two math classes and one resource class in writing. Between the two schools, she is responsible for monitoring the progress and IEPs for 30 students. School A received a grade of “A” for the 2010-2011 school year (FLDOE, 2011) and 51% of the student population qualify for free and/or reduced-price lunches. Lauren’s second school, School B has earned an A, as well (FLDOE, 2011) and 40% of the student population is eligible for free and/or reduced-price lunches

First-year experience. Lauren is the first participant in this study to express a less-than positive first-year teaching experience. She attributes much of her challenges to her itinerant position but is neither angry nor frustrated when sharing her experiences. When asked where she envisioned teaching, she immediately replied, “Where I am now....I only applied to schools that I wanted to be at.” However, because her time is split between two schools, Lauren has stated that she has been unable to develop relationships and collaborate with the majority of her colleagues and has experienced bouts of isolation. Additionally, she feels her first-year of teaching has been mainly comprised of testing and paperwork which leaves little time for her to actually teach. She states, “...I’m testing and I’m testing and I’m testing and I’m doing paperwork and I am doing everything else but teaching at school...” Those times when she is able to teach, Lauren said the most difficult content to teach is writing. When asked why she stated that she had thought math or science would be her most challenging subjects to teach but “[a]t least for math I can look at the book and figure it out but with writing you have to be creative and actually write it [down on paper]. I am not good at that.” As with the other

participants, Lauren sought advice from her special education colleagues and Ava (a participant of this study who works with Lauren at School B) and was able to acquire resources and instructional materials that were able to assist her with instruction.

Despite her significant challenges, Lauren will be returning to teach next year. Both schools have a full-time position open for the next school year and she has been offered a position at both schools but she has not yet made a decision which school she will be working at full-time. When asked how she feels about this, she responded she is happy with the situation and is planning to consider which school will best fit her needs. Lauren plans to pursue her Masters degree in Educational Leadership next year. Her interests and ultimate goal have always been to obtain a leadership position as an ESE specialist providing support to special education teachers.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Lauren prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of self-efficacy within their schools (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being

“nothing”, which means the participant has no influence and 9 being “a great deal” of influence. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Lauren achieved an overall mean score of 6.1 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline.. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias). Lauren received an overall mean score of 6.2 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support.

Administrative support. Lauren shared “at the first school, I really don’t have administrative support.” She attributes this to her uncharacteristic work schedule in which she leaves in the early afternoon, is unable to attend faculty meetings, and is unavailable after school. As a result, she feels she has not had the opportunity to develop relationships with her administration. But, Lauren is quick to state, “she is nice as can be. If I went to her and I needed something she would help me.” However, at her second school, she believes she is able to communicate with her administration more because she

is able to spend more time at the school after the school hours have ended. “The second school is a little more different because I am there in the afternoon and it seems like there is more time to interact with her [principal].”

Mentorship. Lauren was provided with four different mentors during her first year of teaching and none of them were certified in special education. Each mentor departed early due to personal issues ensuing in a rotating door of mentors. As a result, Lauren was unable to develop a relationship with any of them, though she shared that all were nice. Lauren did not express any negative sentiments towards this situation and when asked why, she simply stated that she was aware these situations could arise. She stated that all of her mentors were helpful and provided her with assistance regarding lesson planning but when she needed assistance specific to special education paperwork and responsibilities she sought help from her special education colleagues and relied heavily on Ava for support (and vice versa). She repeatedly stated that her mentors were “nice” but she also added that it would have been less stressful for her if she was provided with one mentor whose experience resided in special education.

School climate. Lauren felt that the school climates for both schools were negative. At School A she did not have a relationship with her administration, or her colleagues, because she was not available in the afternoon and after-school hours. As already noted, she was unable to collaborate with her co-teach partner at School B “I have tried to have conversations and set up planning times and sometimes I walk in there [co-teach classroom] and I’m in there for math and they are doing reading and she will say, ‘oh, we did math at 9:00 so we could catch up on our reading.’ I’m not even at the school at 9:00.” Lauren also shared that many of the faculty members at School B were

“a lot more cattier.” She explained that it seemed as if they were constantly gossiping about their colleagues and did not have anything nice to say about others. In order to stay away from conflict, she avoided interacting with those teachers.

Access to instructional resources. Lauren has had access to the necessary instructional resources at both schools. In addition she was provided the opportunities to attend professional development on various instructional tools (i.e. mimeograph training and SMART board). Her classroom at school B contained various resources and instructional kits designed for students with disabilities. Other colleagues come to her when seeking resources for their students.

Teacher preparation program. Lauren shares that the coursework within her teacher preparation program was very beneficial and she consistently employed the strategies taught to her throughout her first year of teaching. However, she felt that the field experiences “didn’t help at all.” When asked to elaborate, she stated her placements were primarily in the middle school setting and she had no intention of teaching at the middle school level. She would have preferred to have been placed in the elementary school setting for her final internship experience as she felt this would have provided her with experience in the various academic curricula specifically designed for the K-5 learner. She felt that as a result of her previous placements, she started the school year “behind the curve” and spent much of her time learning new academic programs rather than actually teaching them to her students. However, she did add that as a result of what she learned in her behavior management class, her special education colleagues have requested her presence each time they developed a functional behavior assessment (FBA). Lauren’s only recommendation for her teacher preparation program is to place

students in their desired final internship settings. However, she understands that that is not always feasible.

Case eight: Ava. Ava is a quiet, sometimes shy, White female who is in her early twenties and is the youngest participant in this study. She is currently working as a special education teacher at an elementary school and co-teaches three classes (reading, writing, and math) and provides support facilitation for two classes. As a support facilitator, Ava is not required to be in the classroom full-time but she is responsible for ensuring that the necessary accommodations and instructional strategies are being provided to students with disabilities. All of her students are white and she shares the responsibility of monitoring the progress and IEP's of 20 students with another beginning special education teacher who is also participating in this study (Lauren). Ava is working at a school which earned a grade of "A" for the 2010-2011 school year (FLDOE, 2011). Also, 40% of the student population is eligible for free and/or reduced-price lunches.

First-year experience. Ava's first-year teaching experiences are similar to Lauren's experiences and they are both colleagues at School B. Ava shared that she does not feel respected nor valued as a special educator because her co-teach partners are unwilling to plan lessons with her despite the multiple conversation she has had with them about this situation. Additionally, she expressed her dismay at how one particular co-teach partner instructed students with disabilities. "The fifth grade that I go into, the ESE (Exceptional Student Education) kids are very secluded. And the teacher will point them out. Or not give them their accommodations because she doesn't think they're [accommodations] are fair." Ava again states that she initiated several conversations with her but Ava stated her co-teach partner was not receptive to the feedback. Further,

Ava has expressed feelings of loneliness. She has been unable to develop positive relationships with many of her colleagues and attributes this difficulty to the already existing cliques within the school. She desires to have friends at her school but has found developing friendships to be challenging. When asked to elaborate, she says, "...some challenges are gossip because some people don't keep to themselves and they want to be in everyone's business or they say things that aren't true...other challenges are just trying to get along."

Despite these difficulties, Ava has not experienced any problems with teaching the various content areas and feels confident in planning and implementing instruction to best meet the needs of her students. She did share that some of her special education colleagues have come to her to seek advice on behavior management and instructional strategies. Additionally, Ava has been offered the same position at her current school for next year by her administration. At the prospect of continuing onto her second year of teaching, she is neither excited nor disappointed. Ava does not see herself as a classroom teacher for long. Rather, she would like to pursue an advanced degree and become an ESE specialist. When asked if she would like to have this position at her current school she said yes because she feels that a lot of changes need to be made.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Ava prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of self-

efficacy within their schools (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being “nothing”, which means the participant has no influence and 9 being “a great deal” of influence. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Ava achieved an overall mean score of 6.1 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline.. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias, 2001). Ava received an overall mean score of 5.8 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support.

Administrative support. Ava described her overall experiences with her administration as adequate. She explained that in the beginning of the year, her principal

provided her with a great deal of support but as the year continued, Ava saw less and less of her principal. “She got really busy, so then she was not available as much. Also, it seemed like after the first half of the year, I kind of got that vibe that I shouldn’t have as many questions....So then I felt leery about asking her questions.” Though she experienced challenges in seeking assistance from her principal, Ava attributes this to her principal’s busy schedule and the fact that this was her first year as principal for this school. Ava continued by sharing that some meetings with her principal were helpful and others were not. “I feel like I could ask her anything [in the beginning of the school year], but she has a very roundabout way of answering people. So, I feel sometimes when I leave I don’t really understand what she meant because I don’t know if she’s telling me to do something or telling me not to do something.”

Mentorship. Ava was provided a mentor whose previous experience was teaching sixth grade geography. She did not have a positive relationship with her mentor because she considered her to be “stand-offish” and her mentor was unavailable to meet with Ava because she spent the majority of her time providing assistance to three other beginning teachers (general educators) who she was assigned to help. Also, her mentor was unable to provide her with guidance with anything related to special education. Instead, Ava sought assistance from her field supervisor from her final internship. She shared that she had kept in touch with her and was comfortable in going to her for assistance and advice. When asked how she sought help in completing special education paperwork, she stated that she and Lauren reviewed past IEP’s together and used them as references to complete new IEP’s. She continued by stating they relied heavily on each for support.

School climate. Overall, Ava considers her school climate to be poor. She attributes this to the cliques that have been formed by teachers and the gossip that occurs as a result of these cliques. These established groups were predominately comprised of individuals in her age group (early to late 20s). She expressed her feelings of loneliness because she was unable to connect with her same-age colleagues (i.e., she was unable to become a member in any of the established cliques). Additionally, she shares that she has struggled to collaborate with one of her co-teach partners. When asked how she addressed this challenge, she shared that she spoke with her on multiple occasions but no changes have occurred. She feels that this partner does not understand her role as a special education teacher and views her as an assistant rather than a teacher.

Access to instructional resources. Ava has experienced some challenges in accessing the necessary instructional resources for her students but she attributes that to time not her administration. “If you order it, it takes a really long time...a lot of my kids were having trouble with phonics and coding, and spelling and so the ESE specialist told me to order this book. I put the order in September and didn’t get the book until January.”

Teacher preparation program. Ava has found her field experiences to be extremely beneficial for her. She shared that the majority of her field experiences took place in the inclusive setting. As a result, she felt very confident and well-prepared to teach in her current co-teach settings. She also stated that much of what she learned in her course work is consistently being applied within her own classrooms. For example, she consistently uses student data to plan instruction and therefore is able to tailor her instruction to meet her students’ individual needs.

When asked if she had any recommendations for her teacher preparation program, she wishes that her program provided her with opportunities to view the different databases special education teachers use to develop IEPs. She found the writing of IEP's as her greatest challenge and did not feel that she received sufficient preparation from her teacher education program. Ava suggested having district officials present a mini-workshop on IEP development because she feels this may have alleviated some of her stress and anxiety during the first few weeks of the school year. She also suggests creating a blog or online chat in which her classmates and former graduates can come together and share instructional resources and material.

Case nine: Quinn

Quinn is a quiet, self-assured White female who is in her late twenties and currently works as a special education teacher at an elementary school. All of the classes she teaches are in the co-teach setting (reading, writing, and math). She is responsible for monitoring the progress and IEP's for 15 students and the majority of students within her classes are Hispanic. Quinn teaches at a school which earned a grade of "C" for the 2010-2011 school year (FLDOE, 2011). Additionally, her school is a Title I school in which 90% of the student population is eligible to receive free and/or reduced lunches.

First-year experience. Quinn shared that her greatest success as a first-year teacher was helping one of her students improve her reading level by two grade levels. "I am so proud of her...at the beginning of the school year she came at a first grade level, but by the time she left [moved]...I had her reading at a mid-third grade level." She continued by saying that she also helped to improve 99% of her students' reading scores on the yearly administered state exam (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test). She

felt very proud of her accomplishments and stated she felt confident in teaching the various content areas to her students.

However, her most significant challenge was being able to successfully collaborate and communicate with her one of her co-teach partners. Although Quinn had positive experiences with her other two partners, who were veteran teachers, she felt the challenges with this particular teacher could be attributed to both of their novice experiences as teachers. As Quinn reflects back on her experiences she states, “I think because we were both new, we wanted to prove we were good...I think we didn’t want to listen to each other’s ideas.” But by having several conversations throughout the school year, they were able to collaboratively work together by the end of the year. When asked who initiated these conversations, Quinn replied, “I did.”

Quinn is happy to be returning to the same position for the next school year. She is excited about returning to her current school. Quinn plans to one day acquire her Masters in either Special Education or Educational Leadership. She would like to continue working at a Title I school and sees herself remaining in the classroom as a special educator.

Self-efficacy. Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) was administered to Quinn prior to beginning the interview. The Teacher Efficacy instrument is a 30-item scale which has seven subscales including: efficacy to influence decision making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of self-efficacy within their schools (refer to Appendix C for a copy of

the instrument). Sample items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale include: 1) How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?, 2) How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?, and 3) How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administrators to make the school run effectively. Each item from the Teacher Efficacy Scale is measured on a 9-point scale with 1 being “nothing”, which means the participant has no influence and 9 being “a great deal” of influence. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Quinn achieved an overall mean score of 6.2 indicating she considers herself highly efficacious.

Resiliency. Upon completion of Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Resilience Scale instrument was administered (Neil & Dias, 2001). The Resilience Scale (Appendix D) is a 15 item instrument which measures perceived level of resilience. Sample items include: 1) I usually take things in stride; 2) I feel that I can handle many things at a time; and, 3) I have self-discipline.. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to each statement based on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 7 = Agree.). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of 4 or below shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency. A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias). Quinn received an overall mean score of 6.1 indicating she considers herself highly resilient.

Quality induction support.

Administrative support. Quinn shares that she has a positive relationship with her administration. She maintains that her principal has an open-door policy and she is comfortable in seeking guidance and advice from her administration. She shared that on one occasion her co-teach partner was not giving Quinn the opportunity to provide small-group instruction to her reading group. Quinn had discussed her concern to her co-teach partner to no avail. As a result, she sought out the advice of her principal who said to her, “you need to tell her that I say, every single day without fail [you are to conduct small-group instruction], and if she has a problem with it, she can come and talk to me.” Quinn said the problem was quickly resolved and she felt valued by her administration because her concern was immediately addressed.

Mentorship. Quinn was provided a mentor who was not certified in special education. After learning of the qualifications of her mentor at the one-day induction program provided by her district, Quinn asked a district official if she could be provided with a mentor whose expertise resided in special education. Unfortunately, her request was declined as her particular district has a current shortage of special education mentors. However, she did share that her mentor was helpful in providing her with assistance in lesson planning by providing her with extensive feedback after conducting classroom observations. But she directed all of her questions that were related to special education to her special education colleagues who were able to better assist her.

School climate. Overall, Quinn has had a positive experience with her school’s culture. She did experience challenges in collaborating with one of her co-teach partners, who is also a first-year teacher. She attributed their challenges to their different teaching

philosophies and viewpoints. “I think we both wanted to prove that we could do it on our own and so we realized that we were making it worse and it wasn’t good for the students so we had to overcome our personalities and just do what was best for the students.” At this time, their relationship has improved after having several conversations throughout the school year in which they discussed their expectations for the classroom and the concerns that still remained. They will be again working together during the next school year.

Access to instructional resources. Quinn has not experienced any challenges in acquiring the necessary instructional resources for her students. She said she was provided with a large supply of resources and materials.

Teacher preparation program. Quinn attributes much of her success as a first-year special education teacher to her teacher preparation program. She felt that she was fully prepared to enter the classroom on her own as a result of the diverse field experiences she had the opportunity to experience. She attributes much of her success in working at Title I school to her teacher preparation program. For example, Quinn’s experiences in learning about her students are very similar to Rachel’s experiences. Quinn recalls that in the beginning of the school year many of her students came to class either irritable or extremely fatigued thus resulting in classroom disruptions which interrupted her carefully planned lessons. She said she was aware that her students’ behaviors were a result of something and remembered the words of one of her professors who told her classmates to seek out the problem causing the behavior issue. After talking to her students, she learned that some were not getting enough sleep because they were caring for their younger siblings while their mothers worked at night or they did not get

enough sleep because they had slept in a car the previous night. Some were hungry because their bus arrived late to school and they were unable to get breakfast from the school cafeteria. As a result, Quinn immediately changed her instructional lessons and strategies by having more interactive, hands-on lessons in the early school hours and she made sure to have snacks for her students who were hungry. She continued by saying “my instructors were honest, sometimes brutally honest, about the realities of teaching and working in schools. They were right.” Her only recommendation for her teacher preparation program is that she would like to see her instructors come and observe her in her current classroom settings. She states, “so they can see how well I am doing because of them.”

Data Analysis

After the data were collected, four levels of analysis were conducted. The first analytical level required a descriptive analysis of the data collected from Bandura’s Teacher Efficacy Scale (1997) and the Resiliency Scale (2001). In the second level of analysis, the interview transcripts were reviewed and the participants’ responses were then determined to either support or negate the propositions using the interview rating scale which can be found in Appendix F. The third level of analysis followed in which the interview data were reviewing using the pattern-matching logic instrument. In the fourth and final level of analysis a cross-case synthesis was conducted in which word tables were created in order to display the data for each individual case (Yin, 2009). All four levels of analysis will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

First analytical level: descriptive means. Prior to conducting the interviews, Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) and The Resiliency Scale (Neil & Dias,

2001) were administered to all of the participants. A total mean score of 5 to 9 indicates a strong self-perceived level of efficacy while a total mean score of less than 5 indicates a low self-perceived level of self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). A total mean score of 4 to 7 indicates a strong self-perceived level of resiliency while a total mean score of below 4 shows a minimal level of self-perceived resiliency (Neil & Dias, 2001). Results indicate all participants demonstrate a high level of self-efficacy and possess a strong sense of resilience (Table 5).

Table 5

Results of Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale and Resiliency Scale

Participant	Self-Efficacy	Resiliency
Sue (Case 1)	8.2	6.6
Emma (Case 2)	6.8	5.9
Terri (Case 3)	6.5	5.8
Brittany (Case 4)	5.9	6.3
Rachel (Case 5)	7.0	6.5
Tina (Case 6)	6.6	6.5
Lauren (Case 7)	6.1	6.2
Ava (Case 8)	6.1	5.8
Quinn (Case 9)	6.2	6.1

Second analytical level: testing propositions. Once the interviews were completed, the second level of data analysis was conducted. In the second level of analysis, the researcher and external reviewer independently read the interview transcripts, matched responses to corresponding proposition, and determined if the participants' responses either supported or negated the propositions using the interview rating scale (Appendix F). Appendix H, which linked specific interview questions to specific propositions, was used as a guide. The participants' responses were rated on a scale ranging from +3 to +1 in which +3 indicates the responses strongly support the

proposition, +2 indicates moderate support, and +1 indicates mild support. If the participants' responses negated the propositions, then they were rated from -3 to -1 in which -3 indicates the data strongly negate the proposition, -2 indicates moderate negation, and -1 indicates mild negation. A score of 0 signifies the data did not support or negate the propositions. Results from both analyses were compared to determine interrater reliability or percent of agreement. The reviewer and researcher were required to achieve a rate of agreement $\geq 80\%$. In this study, the researcher and reviewer achieved a rate of agreement of 91%. The results are detailed in Appendix I.

The propositions addressed three separate categories: 1) Beginning Special Educators; 2) Quality Induction Support; and 3) Teacher Preparation. The category of Beginning Special Educators contained 11 propositions and all propositions were specific to the experiences of beginning special education teachers, QIS consisted of six propositions and all propositions were specific to the participants' experiences with their administration, mentors, school's climate, and access to necessary instructional resources. The teacher preparation category included 5 propositions which addressed the participants' experiences within their teacher preparation program. A total score was tabulated by calculating the sum within each category (i.e. range of +33 to -33 for the category of Beginning Special Educators). Table 6 displays the results of the proposition testing.

Table 6

Results from Proposition Testing

Propositions	Cases								
Beginning Special Educators Propositions	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers.	-3	-3	-2	-3	-3	-3	+3	+3	-2
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads (productive disequilibrium).	-3	-3	+1	-3	-3	-3	+3	+3	-3

Propositions	Cases								
Beginning Special Educators Propositions	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs.	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3
Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to develop their current teaching expectations and beliefs which result in disequilibrium.	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	+2	+2	-3
Beginning special education teachers' post-school experiences conflict with their expectations of their schools' climates.	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	+2	+2	-3
Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers especially in light of new initiatives and legislation.	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	+2	-3	-3	-3

Propositions	Cases								
Beginning Special Educators Propositions	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.	+1	-2	-3	+1	+2	-2	+2	-3	-3
Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the appropriate and effective accommodations.	+1	-2	-3	+1	+1	-2	+2	-3	-3
Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because beginning special education teachers face challenges in accessing the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities).	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	+3	-3

Propositions	Cases								
Beginning Special Educators Propositions	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators.	-3	-2	+3	-3	-3	-3	+3	+3	+3
Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-3	-3	-3
Total Score (Range +33 to-33)	-25	-30	-22	-25	-24	-25	+5	+1	-26

Propositions	Cases								
Quality Induction Propositions	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support.	+3	-2	-2	+3	+3	-2	-3	-3	-2
Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher.	+3	-1	+3	+3	+3	-3	-3	-3	-1
Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures.	+3	-1	+3	+3	+3	-3	-3	-3	-1

Propositions	Cases								
Quality Induction Propositions	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
Retention of beginning special education teachers can be improved through QIS by having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties.	+3	-3	+3	+3	+3	-3	-3	-3	-3
Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration.	+3	+3	-3	+3	+3	+2	-3	-3	+3

Propositions	Cases								
Quality Induction Propositions	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students.	+3	+3	-3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+2	+3
Total Score (Range +18 to -18)	+18	-1	+1	+18	+18	-6	-12	-13	-1

Propositions	Cases								
Teacher preparation	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for teachers to connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. obs. and supervised teaching).	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	-3	+3	+3
Teacher preparation programs prepare special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+1	+3	+3

Propositions	Cases								
Teacher preparation	Sue	Emma	Terri	Brittany	Rachel	Tina	Lauren	Ava	Quinn
Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3
Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3
Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching (i.e. Skype conferences and observations).	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+1	-2	+1	+2
Total Score (Range +15 to -15)	+13	+13	+14	+14	+14	+13	+2	+13	+14

Summary.

Beginning special educators. Based on the results of the proposition testing, seven out of the nine participants' interview responses strongly negated the propositions specific to Beginning Special Educators. Though the literature indicates that beginning special education teachers experience significant challenges within their first years of teaching, seven out of the nine participants had contrary experiences. All seven participants contributed their successful first year to the support they received from their administration and/or mentors and to the preparation they received in their teacher preparation programs. However, responses from Lauren (+5) and Ava (+1) weakly supported the propositions specific to the experiences of beginning special educators. Both participants are currently employed at the same elementary school setting and both participants have attributed their significant challenges as first-year special educators to the sense of isolation they have felt throughout their first year of teaching, their inability to collaborate and plan lessons with their co-teach partners, and their overwhelming large case load of students. Additionally, Lauren expressed concerns in teaching the content areas, specifically the area of writing. As a result, both participants anticipate pursuing their masters within the next school year in order to transition from teacher to Special Education Specialist.

Quality induction support. Three out of the nine participants' interview responses strongly supported the propositions specific to QIS. Sue, Brittany, and Rachel had quality mentors, positive relationships with their administrations, experienced a positive school climate, and had access to the needed instructional resources. However, six out of the nine participants had contrasting experiences. Five participants (Emma, Tina,

Lauren, Ava, and Quinn) did not have quality mentors. Quality mentors can be defined as an individual who is a special educator, had extensive knowledge on curriculum and instruction, and has the time to meet with the beginning special educator at least once a week informally. Emma, Lauren, Ava, and Quinn were provided mentors who were not certified in special education. Therefore, all four participants sought guidance from their special education colleagues when they had questions specific to special education responsibilities and procedures. Although Tina was assigned a mentor who was certified in special education, her mentor lacked knowledge in evidence-based instructional practices and in the current rules and regulations related to special education because she has not served as a classroom teacher for quite some time. As a result, she too sought assistance from her special education colleagues. Terri was fortunate to be provided a quality mentor who assisted her greatly, but she had a non-existent relationship with her administration and had difficulty in accessing the necessary instructional resources for her students in the beginning of the school year.

Teacher preparation. Eight out of the nine participant interview responses strongly supported the propositions specific to Teacher Preparation. Additionally, all eight agreed that the field experiences component within their program greatly contributed to their successful first year as special educators and all eight participants felt prepared and ready to enter the teaching field. However, Lauren's responses weakly supported the propositions because she did not believe the field experience component within her teacher preparation program was beneficial. Due to her placement in a secondary setting for her final internship, Lauren felt that she was lacking significant

knowledge of the K-5 curriculum when she began teaching at her current elementary school.

Third analytical level: pattern-matching logic. The third level of data analysis that was conducted was the pattern-matching logic. The purpose of this form of analysis was to compare the empirical based pattern (i.e., participants' interview responses) with a predicted one (i.e., the research based propositions) (Yin, 2009). For each participant, if the interview response negated the proposition (score of -3, -2, or -1) then the proposition was categorized as a "No." However, if the interview response supported the proposition (score of +3, +2, or +1) then the proposition was categorized as a "Yes." If the participant's response was mixed, in which the response could be categorized as either "Yes" or "No" then the response was checked as "Mixed." All interview transcripts were analyzed by the researcher and an independent reviewer who is knowledgeable in Yin's methodology and in the area of special education teacher preparation. Results from both analyses were compared to determine inter-rater reliability or percent of agreement. The reviewer and researcher were required to achieve a rate of agreement $\geq 80\%$. In this study, the researcher and reviewer achieved a rate of agreement of 100%. Table 7 displays the results from the pattern-matching logic.

Table 7

Results from Pattern-Matching Logic

Beginning Special Educators Propositions	Yes	No	Mixed
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers.	2	7	0
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads (productive disequilibrium).	3	6	0
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs.	0	9	0
Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to develop their current teaching expectations and beliefs which result in disequilibrium.	2	7	0
Beginning special education teachers' post-school experiences conflict with their expectations of their schools' climates.	2	7	0
Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers especially in light of new initiatives and legislation.	1	8	0
Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.	4	5	0
Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the appropriate and effective accommodations.	4	5	0

Table 7 (Continued)

Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because beginning special education teachers face challenges in accessing the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities).	1	8	0
Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators.	4	5	0
Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.	0	9	0
Quality Induction Propositions	Yes	No	Mixed
QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support.	3	6	0
Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher.	4	5	0
Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures.	4	5	0
Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties.	4	5	0
Retention of beginning special education teachers can be improved through QIS by providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration.	6	3	0

Table 7 (Continued)

Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students.	8	1	0
Teacher Preparation	Yes	No	Mixed
Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for teachers to connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).	8	1	0
Teacher preparation programs prepare special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.	9	0	0
Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.	9	0	0
Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.	9	0	0
Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching (i.e. Skype conferences and observations).	8	1	0

Summary. The results of the pattern-matching logic indicate many of the participants experienced various challenges throughout their first-year, but two out of the seven participants experienced significant challenges within their first-year of teaching. These two participants, Lauren and Ava, are also employed at the same elementary school setting. Also, in support of the literature, none of the participants had difficulties in meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs. However, four out of the nine participants did encounter challenges in collaborating with their general education colleagues. All four stated they attempted, on several occasions, to communicate with their colleagues, though, in the end, they were not receptive. Further, four participants expressed challenges in teaching the subject of writing. When asked why, they shared

they felt inadequate with their own writing skills and therefore struggled to teach it to others.

After reviewing the data based on QIS, it can be determined that only three participants (Sue, Brittany, and Rachel) experienced overall QIS. Four out of nine participants felt they were provided quality mentors. The other five participants were not provided quality mentors causing them to seek guidance and assistance regarding their roles and responsibilities as a special educator from their special education colleagues. Additionally, three out of the six participants had a non-existent relationship with their administrations and only one participant felt she was not provided with the necessary instructional resources for her students. When reviewing the results regarding teacher preparation, only one participant, Lauren, believed the field experience component within her program was not beneficial and she also did not feel that her teacher preparation program provided any type of mentorship and/or support after graduation.

Fourth analytical level: cross-case synthesis. Once the pattern-matching logic was completed, the fourth and final level of analysis was conducted. The purpose of the cross-case synthesis is to create word tables (i.e. key words the researcher feels are important for the study) which allow data to be displayed for each individual case. Figure 4 displays the word tables. In order to best organize and visualize the data, each case was divided into the following categories in descending order: 1) Type of school; 2) Level of perceived self-efficacy and resiliency; 3) Relationship with administration; 4) Type of mentor and relationship; 5) Type of school climate; 6) Access to instructional resources; 7) Perceptions of field experience; and 8) Retention or attrition. The word blocks which are shaded red indicate a negative experience for that particular case. For

those participants who experienced a negative school climate, the cause of that feeling has been placed within the shape of a circle. For example, Terri, Lauren, Ava, and Quinn all experienced a negative school climate. The cause for this feeling was their inability to collaborate with their general education peers. Additionally, both Lauren and Ava desire to transition from teachers to special education specialists as soon as possible which is displayed within the blue ovals. Once the word tables were created, the researcher was able to develop cross-case conclusions about the study which is discussed in Chapter 5. This method is recommended for multiple-case studies because this form of analysis can strengthen the validity of the study (Yin, 2009).

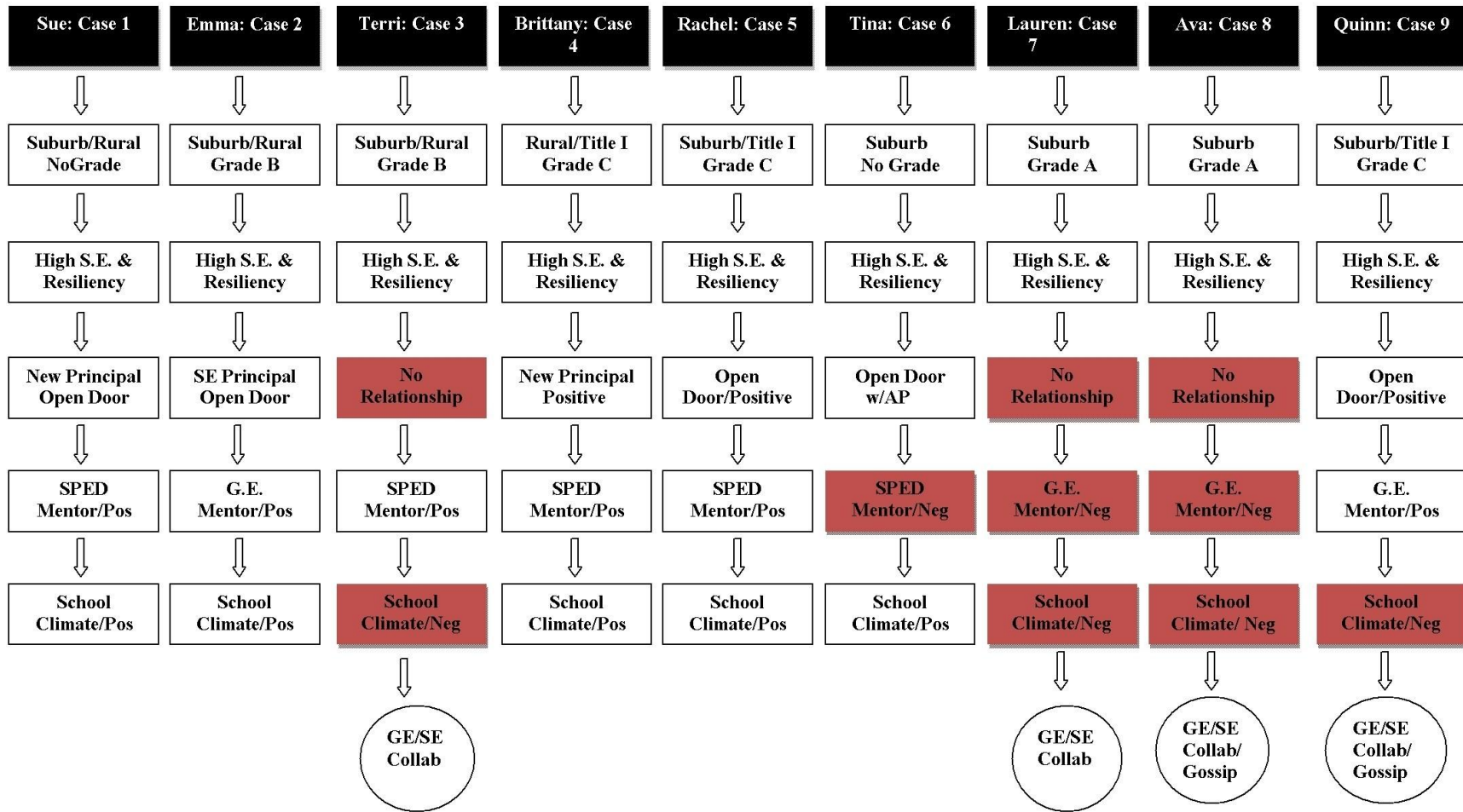
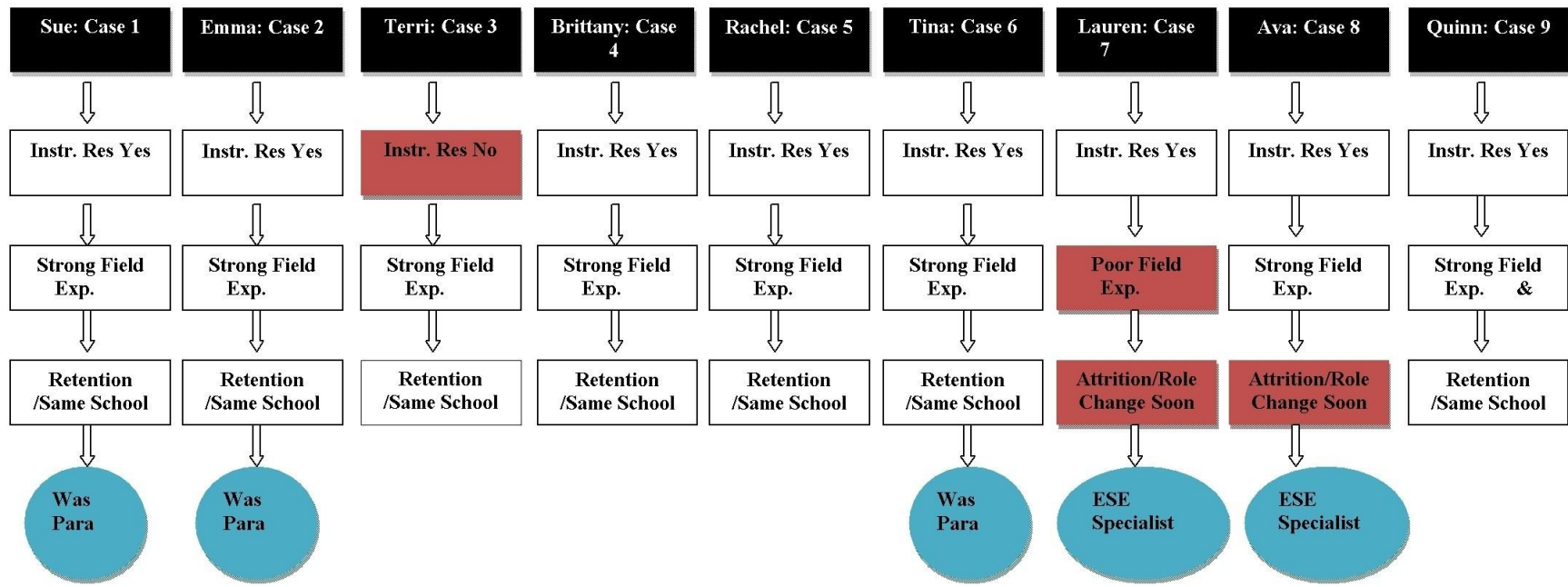


Figure 4. Cross-case synthesis



Summary. After conducting four levels of data analysis, it can be concluded that all of the participants had high perceived levels of self-efficacy and a strong perceived sense of resiliency. Seven out of the nine participants for this study had, for the most part, positive experiences as first-year special education teachers. The seven participants contribute their successful school years to the various levels of support they received from their schools, as well as the education they received within their teacher preparation program. However, two participants (Lauren and Ava) experienced significant challenges within their first-year of teaching.

Eight out of the nine participants felt that the field experience component within their program helped them to learn about the realities of teaching. Only Lauren felt otherwise. All nine will be returning to their schools in the following school year but two participants, Lauren and Ava, are planning to pursue their Masters degree next year so that they may transition from teaching to administration within their current school. Both participants see themselves as Special Education Specialists at their current schools because they “see a lot of changes that need to be made within the ESE team” (Ava, 2011, p. 14). Based on the results of this study it can be concluded that participating in a teacher preparation program with a strong field component and receiving QIS can contribute to the retention of beginning special education teachers. Additionally, having a high sense of self-efficacy and a strong level of resiliency can assist beginning special education teachers to navigate the challenges experienced in their first-year of teaching.

Chapter five will discuss the interpretations of the data specific to self-efficacy and resiliency, beginning teacher experiences, QIS, and teacher preparation. A summary

addressing each of the research questions will then be provided, followed by the limitations of the study and implications for future research.

Chapter Five

Implications and Significance

Research indicates there are several factors that positively affect teacher retention. These include an individual's sense of self-efficacy and level of resiliency (Gu & Day, 2007; Tait, 2008, Yost, 2006), quality induction support which includes administrative support, mentorship, positive school climate, and access to instructional resources (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Conderman & Stephens, 2000; Whitaker, 2000), and teacher preparation programs, especially those that have a linked field component (Coffey, 2010; Connelly & Graham, 2009). This study examined the first year experiences of a select group of special education teachers and focused on how quality induction service (QIS) and teacher preparation affected those experiences. In addition, participants' perceived sense of self-efficacy and resiliency were also examined. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does quality induction support (QIS) and teacher preparation affect the experiences of a select group of first year special education teachers?

This is a broad question which explored the following:

- a) How does their sense of self-efficacy impact their experiences as a first year special education teacher?
- b) How does their level of resiliency impact their experiences as a first year special education teacher?

Data consisted of Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997), the Resiliency Scale (Neil & Dias, 2001) and participant interviews. Data were then analyzed using four levels of analysis.

Discussion will center on each domain or topic area (self-efficacy and resiliency, beginning teacher experiences, QIS, and teacher preparation). A summary addressing each of the research questions will then be provided, followed by the limitations of the study and implications for future research.

Self-efficacy and Resiliency

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy can be defined as an individual's belief in his/her capabilities to successfully accomplish a task. Resiliency is the ability to encounter and overcome challenges in times of stress (Tait, 2008). Teachers who are highly efficacious also possess strong levels of resiliency (Benard, 2004; Bernshausen & Cunningham, 2001; Tait, 2008). All participants in this study perceived themselves as having a strong sense of self-efficacy and high levels of resiliency. Similar to findings by Hoy (2000) and Kalssen and Chiu (2010), participants were secure in their position within the school setting and were strong self-advocates, consistently seeking assistance in a variety of areas throughout their first year. The strong sense of self-efficacy was especially evident in Emma, who stated she kept a notebook filled with questions that she directed to administration and/or colleagues throughout the year. Their sense of self-efficacy and resilience were evident in the manner in which they framed their experiences. In other words, several shared specific situations that based on the literature are considered challenges, yet these participants described them simply as part of the job and responded to them in a proactive, self-determined manner. This supports the need for

additional research in the areas of self-efficacy and resiliency as it may be that a high sense of both may mediate challenges inherent in teaching and experienced by many, if not most, teachers. Further, it may support the need for teacher preparation programs to consider how to foster the development of self-efficacy and resiliency throughout their programs. Fostering these qualities is essential given that beginning special educators who have experienced similar challenges to the participants in this study and possess a low sense of self-efficacy and a low level of resiliency tend to exit the field prematurely (Hoy, 2000; Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

Beginning Teacher Experiences

Teaching is one of the few professions in which novices are expected to perform at the same level as veteran teachers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Lortie, 1975; Tait, 2008). For the beginning educator, this means being skilled in managing classroom behaviors, developing and implementing data-driven instruction, and raising student academic outcomes right from the start. However, the beginning special education teacher has additional responsibilities. Special education teachers are also responsible for developing and monitoring the progress of their students' Individualized Education Programs (IEP) (Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deshler, 2000). Research (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Carter & Scruggs, 2001; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin, & Kilgore, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) indicates that a factor in the attrition of special education teachers is due to challenges they experience in the field which includes increasing workload, understanding the legal mandates and requirements specific to special education, complying with all of the necessary paperwork, and difficulties in collaborating with their general education colleagues.

The propositions in this category were based on the literature and the hypothesis that participants would face similar challenges as those reported in the literature thus supporting the stated propositions. However, seven out of the nine participants' interview responses strongly negated the majority of propositions. In other words, for the most part, the experiences described by these participants did not support the literature specific to the beginning special education teacher experience. For example, they did not experience isolation from other teachers nor did they experience difficulty in connecting what they learned within their teacher preparation program to the actual realities of school. However, four out of the nine participants (Sue, Brittany, Rachel, and Lauren) had initial concerns regarding teaching writing to their students. When asked why, all five participants shared their own struggles and challenges with writing which had left them feeling unprepared to teach their students. In order to overcome this challenge all five sought assistance and guidance from their mentors and colleagues. This is but one example where participants were proactive in finding solutions to the challenges they were experiencing. It is important to note that the *only* content area in which they felt they lacked confidence and questioned their ability to teach was writing, especially considering that many taught math and science.

Four of the participants (Terri, Lauren, Ava, and Quinn) described challenges they had collaborating with their general education colleagues. This supports existing research which indicates many special education teachers experience difficulties and frustration when collaborating and developing relationships with their general education colleagues (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009; Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, Hou, & Garvan, 2009; Kilgore & Griffin, 1998). Lauren, Ava, and Quinn

encountered significant challenges in working with their co-teach partners within their co-teach settings. All stated that their co-teaching relationships lacked parity and they consistently were placed in supportive roles (e.g., disciplinarian and small group instruction). Although all three initiated multiple conversations and meetings with their co-teach partners to address these challenges, only Quinn felt that the relationship with her partner improved somewhat as a result. For Lauren and Ava, their efforts did not result in any changes in their relationship or their role in the classroom. These challenges are problematic for multiple reasons. IDEIA (2004) mandates all students with disabilities be provided access to the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible. As a result, students with disabilities are increasingly being served in inclusive settings. Considering that the majority of general education teachers report they lack specific skills necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009), there is a need for strong collaborative relationships between general education teachers and their special education colleagues. Such partnerships, rooting in parity in which both parties recognize and respect what each brings is essential to providing students with disabilities the necessary instructional support and accommodations to ensure access and academic success.

Three of the participants (Terri, Sue, and Brittany) all taught in self-contained classrooms working with students with Autism. In light of this, it is not necessarily surprising that Terri indicated she was unable to collaborate with her general education colleagues. Also, she felt that in her school an obvious division existed between the general education teachers and special education teachers. Conversely, Sue and Brittany, who teach in the same type of setting as Terri, took it upon themselves to reach out to

their general education colleagues indicating a desire to work together by increasing opportunities to integrate their students into general education settings for social interactions. As a result, their general education colleagues and administrators asked them to provide in-service workshops on working with students with Autism. This proactive approach to building relationships with their general education colleagues can be attributed to their high levels of self-efficacy and strong sense of resilience. In addition, both also had very supportive administrators who fostered an environment conducive to collaboration. Terri did not have that support.

Lauren and Ava were the only two participants whose overall responses weakly supported the propositions specific to the experiences of beginning special educators which may be due to several factors. For example, Lauren was hired as an itinerant special education teacher which means her time is split between two elementary schools, one of which is the same school where Ava works. She spends the morning at one site delivering instruction in both co-teach and resource settings and then travels to the second school in the afternoon where she also delivers instruction in both co-teach and resource settings. Lauren had not been exposed to the concept of itinerant teaching within her teacher preparation program. As a pre-service teacher, Lauren never expected to be working as a special education teacher under these particular circumstances. However, Lauren stated that she only applied to schools where she wanted to work and therefore chose to accept the first job that was offered to her. It is possible that had she waited, she may have found a full-time position at one school rather than having her time split between two schools.

Both Ava and Lauren also expressed their frustration with their large caseload of students and how difficult it was to complete the necessary paperwork on time due to limited guided assistance. That said, though they had challenges, they still relied on each other which demonstrated their high levels of self-efficacy and strong sense of resilience. Additionally, Ava and Lauren also experienced isolation from other teachers but for very different reasons. Lauren's experience of isolation was based on the fact that she was split between two schools and therefore it was difficult to build relationships. For Ava, who was also the study's youngest participant, she explained that her isolation was due to the strongly built existing cliques at her school. These established groups were predominately comprised of individuals in her age group (early to late 20s). While she noted that when faced with questions related to her job responsibilities she willingly sought support from veteran special education teachers, she noted that she felt unable to connect with same age colleagues (i.e., she was unable to become a member in any of the established cliques) and as a result experienced a great deal of loneliness within her first year of teaching. It is possible that Ava's need to fit in can be attributed to her age and the need for social interactions.

Lauren and Ava shared their intentions to immediately pursue their Master's degree so that they may exit teaching and become Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Specialists. Interestingly, both would like to work as ESE Specialists within their current setting because they feel a great deal of work needs to be done to improve the school. This response may be attributed to their high sense of self-efficacy and resilience. They view the school as something that requires improvement and both strongly believe they are capable of taking on this task.

Only two propositions were strongly negated by all participants: 1) Beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs; and 2) Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students. This finding supports the literature which states that the majority of beginning **special educators** do not encounter difficulties in meeting the needs of diverse learners nor do they experience significant challenges in managing various student behaviors (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Carter & Scruggs, 2001; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, Hou, and Garvan (2009) Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin, & Kilgore, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). All participants reported that the most beneficial course in their teacher preparation program was Behavior Management.

Quality Induction Support

It is evident that possessing a high level of self-efficacy and a strong sense of resiliency are crucial to the retention of beginning special education teachers. However, also important is quality induction support (QIS). Research (Boe & Cook, 2006, 2008; Leko & Smith, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) indicates beginning special education teachers who are challenged with their workload and their multiple responsibilities relative to their role as special education teachers may be more likely to leave the teaching field than beginning general education teachers. Many attribute their difficulties to a lack of QIS in which there is limited administrative support, inadequate mentors, poor school climate, and a lack of necessary instructional resources (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Based on the data, the overall results show that only

three out of the nine participants experienced QIS. The following sections will specifically address the participants' experiences within each component attributed to QIS.

Administrative support. According to the literature, administrative support is defined as the administrators' willingness to maintain an open-door policy, lead once a month meetings with beginning teachers where problems, questions, and concerns are addressed, and are consistently visible throughout their school buildings (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Leko & Smith, 2010; Vail, 2005). Six out of the nine participants' responses strongly supported the propositions specific to administrative support. They all experienced positive relationships with their administration. The six participants (Sue, Emma, Brittany, Rachel, Tina, and Quinn) attributed their positive relationships to their administrations' open-door policy. As a result of this policy, they felt comfortable in approaching their administration with their questions and concerns and all felt their concerns were addressed in a timely manner which led them to feel valued and respected.

Research also indicates when administrators provide professional development opportunities to their teachers it can increase the feeling of being valued thereby supporting retention (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). Three of the six participants were specifically invited by their administration to either attend or conduct professional development. The remaining three participants (Terri, Lauren and Ava) indicated they lacked administration support and thus chose to rely on others for assistance. Although administrative support is indicated as a component of QIS, the fact that all participants were able to obtain support, albeit some from colleagues rather than administration, suggests that who provides the support may be less important than the

fact that support can be obtained from someone in the school. The distinction is that administrative support is expected to be freely given while support from other individuals often has to be sought out requiring a high sense of self-efficacy and resiliency in order to engage in this proactive behavior.

Mentorship. A quality mentor for a beginning special education teacher is defined as an individual who is a special educator, is knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction, and is able to meet with the beginning special educator informally at least once a week (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; White & Mason, 2006). Out of the nine participants, only four participants (Sue, Terri, Brittany, Rachel) had mentors who were considered quality mentors. Four other participants were assigned mentors that in some cases were able to provide some level of assistance but who did not possess all of the qualifications needed to be designated a quality mentor and one participant was provided a mentor who did not offer her any assistance. Out of the four participants who received some assistance from their mentors, two had mentors who were not certified in special education. They were knowledgeable in the curriculum but were unable to provide support in issues related to special education. Another mentor was certified in special education but had been out of the classroom for a significant amount of time. One participant described her mentor situation as a revolving door as she was assigned four mentors, three of whom resigned their duties as mentors due to personal reasons. That said, only three participants felt unsupported by their mentors and most participants noted that their mentors were able to provide instructional support and critical feedback, and were accessible and “nice.” Similar to administration support, all participants sought support from individuals throughout their school setting; thus, it could

be surmised that all participants sought out informal mentor relationships that were as beneficial, if not more so, than the formal mentor relationships.

School climate. A positive school climate is defined as continued administrative support in decision-making and open-door policy in communicating with administration, an environment that supports collaboration amongst its faculty, and access to instructional resources to best meet the needs of students with disabilities (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Based on the results of this study, four (Terri, Lauren, Ava, and Quinn) out of the nine participants experienced negative school climates. All four participants attributed much of their school's negative climate to the inability to collaborate and develop relationships with their general education colleagues which is not uncommon for beginning special education teachers (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009; Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, Hou, & Garvan, 2009; Kilgore & Griffin, 1998). Additionally, Terri, Lauren, and Ava's non-existent relationships with their administration also attributed to their perceptions of a negative school climate. Terri was the only participant who experienced challenges with all three components related to school climate (i.e. lack of administrative support, environment does not support collaboration, and lack of necessary instructional resources). Yet, as Terri was sharing her experiences, despite all of the challenges she experienced, she maintained a smile on her face throughout the interview and was ecstatic to be returning to this same school next year. Again, it could be that as a highly efficacious and resilient individual, and as someone who felt well-prepared to meet the challenges and realities of schools by her teacher preparation program, she believes she has the necessary skills and attributes to deal with whatever she is faced with. Five of the participants (Sue, Emma, Brittany,

Rachel, and Tina) experienced positive school climates in which they developed positive relationships with their co-teach partners and general education colleagues. This was due to outreach by their administration, mentors, and colleagues as well as their own initiative and self-determined behavior.

Access to instructional resources. Eight out of the nine participants' responses strongly supported the propositions specific to instructional resources (i.e., they had access to the necessary instructional resources). Although the literature (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kaufhold, Alavez, & Arnold, 2006; Leko & Smith, 2010) indicates that many beginning special education teachers have expressed difficulty in acquiring the grade-appropriate and relevant curriculum material for their students, eight out of the nine participants' responses do not support these findings as they felt they were able to obtain the necessary materials to instruct their students. Their lack of challenges in accessing the necessary resources may be a result of the need to increase student performance on state-wide assessments and the pressures of school accountability; thus causing principals to ensure their faculty members are provided with the appropriate curriculum in order to help raise student performance levels. Only one participant (Terri) reported challenges in obtaining resources as needed to perform her duties in a timely manner increasing her sense of frustration and feeling overwhelmed. In a few instances, participants shared they had spent a significant amount of their own money to purchase materials for their class. Rather than fault administration, they assigned blame for this to the existing economic challenges faced by districts today. These participants had strong relationships with their administration and thus it is possible that this was a factor in how they responded to the fact that they had to purchase resources out of their own pocket.

One participant (Sue) who taught in a self-contained setting for students with Autism at the high school level, stated that there were difficulties obtaining desired resources but lauded her assistant principal's ability to obtain materials for her from elementary schools. This is somewhat troubling considering that IDEIA 2004 mandates access to the general education curriculum and the state has revised their standards so that *all* students are afforded that access. For students with significant disabilities, Access Points have been identified at the independent, supported and participatory levels, each correlated to grade level standards and benchmarks. Thus, providing her with materials at the elementary level (even though her students may be performing at that level) does not meet the intent of IDEIA 2004 and NCLB.

Teacher Preparation

Although the literature is limited to special education teacher preparation and its effects on retention, the studies that do exist indicate teacher preparation contributes to the retention of special education teachers (Burtstein, Lombardi, Czech, Smith, & Kretschmer, 2009; Connelly & Graham, 2009). Eight out of the nine participants' responses strongly support the literature and the propositions specific to teacher preparation. Only Lauren's responses weakly supported the propositions. However, all of the participants strongly believed their coursework and semester-long performance-based key assessments prepared them to enter the field as special education teachers and all felt their course on behavior management was the most beneficial. As a result, they felt their main strength was their ability to effectively manage student behavior in their classroom(s). This ability was evident to others as in several cases participants reported having colleagues seek assistance from them in this area. Lauren shared how she had

informally been designated as the “go-to person” when developing Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA). Each time an FBA had to be developed for a student her special education colleagues requested her presence to assist them in developing the document and identifying interventions.

One component of teacher preparation which contributes significantly to teacher retention is field experiences (NCES, 2010). Eight out of the nine participants’ responses strongly supported the proposition and literature specific to the benefits of field experiences. All eight participants stated their semester-long field experiences, which were in various grade levels and settings, significantly helped them to navigate the challenges they experienced within their first-year of teaching. The eight found their final internship, in which they were required to develop lessons and instruct five days a week for an entire semester, as the most beneficial because they were provided a hands-on glimpse of the realities of teaching. Only Lauren’s interview responses did not support the propositions. Lauren expressed her dismay at being placed in a middle school setting for her final internship placement. She shared that she had always wanted to work in the elementary school setting and felt this placement placed her “behind the curve” with regards to having knowledge in the K-5 academic curricula. When asked if she found any of her field experience placements beneficial, she was quick to say no, although she was placed in an elementary setting during her second semester in her teacher preparation program. Her answer of “no” may be a result of her overall frustration at having been placed in a middle school rather than an elementary school for her final internship experience as well as the fact that she was not exposed to the role of an itinerant teacher.

Further, according to Bandura (1994), the act of having the pre-service student engage in and master the responsibilities of a teacher under the guidance and tutelage of teacher educators and supervising classroom teachers is most beneficial in strengthening one's sense of self-efficacy. Eight out of the nine participants strongly expressed the benefits of their field experiences and how these experiences enabled them to become confident in themselves as educators. Although Lauren felt otherwise, she was not hesitant in seeking guidance and assistance when needed. Also, despite the significant challenges they experienced, both Lauren and Ava are planning to return to the classroom in the following school year. Further, they both want to become Special Education specialists and work at their current school because they want to make a difference; they want to improve their school. This desire to stay and provide assistance to their school may be linked to their perceived high sense of self-efficacy and high level of resiliency.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. It was a small sample size (nine) although this sample size is appropriate for the method. The sample was drawn from one university and all participants graduated from the same program. While this may be considered a limitation, it may also be considered a strength of the study in that all participants participated in the same coursework and had the same requirements and assessments to complete. Additionally, they all experienced the same field experiences component in which the number, intensity and duration of the field experiences were the same. However, the purpose of case study methodology is to generalize to a theory not a population. In this case, a theory was developed and propositions supported by the literature were identified, tested, and analyzed thus addressing internal validity for this

study. Also, I have a prior relationship with all nine participants having served as their instructor throughout part of their undergraduate program. Possible bias was addressed by using member checks and external reviewers throughout the various stages of data analysis. Delimitations for my study include not addressing beginning special education teachers who completed alternative certification programs and the experiences of beginning general education teachers.

Summary

Research Question: How does quality induction support (QIS) and teacher preparation affect the experiences of a select group of first year special education teachers?

- a) How does their sense of self-efficacy impact their experiences as a first year special education teacher?
- b) How does their level of resiliency impact their experiences as a first year special education teacher?

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that three components working in tandem support the retention of beginning special education teachers: 1) a high sense of self-efficacy and a high level of resiliency; 2) QIS and; 3) teacher preparation programs with a field experience component. Despite the varying levels of challenges all of the participants experienced, all nine participants demonstrated a strong sense of perceived self-efficacy and a high level of perceived resiliency which can be attributed to their success in overcoming obstacles and challenges that were presented before them throughout their first-year of teaching. Also, all of the challenges faced by all of the participants were not viewed as insurmountable nor unmanageable by them. Some participants did not even view their difficulties as challenges. Rather, they

perceived them as being part of the job and had confidence in their abilities to be able to overcome them.

Additionally, six out of the nine participants experienced some or none of the components which comprise of QIS. These participants did require some level of support within their schools but were able to manage the challenges they experienced without having all of the components of QIS in place. In being highly efficacious and resilient individuals, the participants were able to be proactive and seek guidance and assistance from someone (i.e. special education colleague, mentor, administrator, etc.) within their school setting. Data indicate the participants' high sense of self-efficacy and strong levels of resiliency can be linked to their teacher preparation program which had a field experience component. Based on the participants' responses and experiences, it can be concluded that their teacher preparation program helped foster their sense of self-efficacy and resiliency by linking their coursework to their field experiences and providing them with opportunities to connect theory to the practice of teaching. Additionally, their field experiences allowed them to teach in various classroom settings in which they were provided the opportunity to practice teaching under the supervision of their instructors and field supervisors and received critical feedback regarding their performances.

Implications for Future Research

There is limited research specific to beginning special education teacher experiences and special education teacher preparation. The findings from this study contribute to the literature-base by providing initial information specific to beginning special education teachers' experiences. However, in order to improve the factors that

lead to teacher retention in special education, additional research is required. One recommendation is to conduct a longitudinal study in which these same nine participants are followed for four additional years. Four to five of every ten new special education teachers leave the field within the first five years (CEC, 2000; Olivarez & Arnold, 2006) and it would be interesting to see if these data are applicable to the nine participants within this study. Though two of the participants seemed adamant about leaving the classroom within the next two years, they are still planning to remain in the field of education. It would be interesting to see how their second year of teaching will impact their decisions.

The findings in this study suggest self-efficacy and resilience to be mediating factors that enabled all of the participants to successfully navigate their first-year of teaching as special education teachers. However, additional research is needed in this area. It may be beneficial for teacher preparation programs to utilize Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (1997) and the Resiliency Scale (Neil & Dias, 2001) within their programs to assess how well they are preparing their pre-service teachers in becoming highly efficacious and resilient individuals. Instruments can be administered at three points in time (beginning of the program, middle of the program, and end of the program) in order to determine if progress is being made.

Further, more research is needed to examine how special education teacher preparation programs impact the retention of beginning special education teachers. Although this study determined special education teacher preparation with a field experience component positively impacted teacher retention, it was examined on a small scale. Examining a larger population would provide greater information on how the

practice of connecting coursework to field experiences impact the beginning special education teacher's experience. Also, additional research is needed not only in each specific area (self-efficacy and resilience, QIS, and teacher preparation) but also in how each area intersects and influences one another. These findings could help provide information as to how teacher preparation programs and school districts could work together to help increase the retention of beginning special education teachers.

Finally, an examination of the beginning experiences of special education teachers who completed alternative certification programs is needed in order to determine how their beginning experiences differed, or were similar, to traditionally prepared beginning special educators. These data could help determine how both programs impact the beginning experiences of special educators as well as compare how they influence teacher retention.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher and previous instructor for all of the participants in this study, I found it difficult not to provide my comments or remark on their experiences as first-year special education teachers and as pre-service teachers within their teacher preparation program. Specifically, when the participants expressed their challenges, I felt conflicted. I found it to be very difficult not to jump in and provide my advice to them. I desired to use their challenges as teachable moments. As their former instructor for several courses I still felt quite invested in their learning. For example, when Lauren informed me that she regarded her field experiences as insignificant, I immediately opened my mouth and then proceeded to immediately close it. Although, I knew I was unable to share my thoughts, I left this particular interview frustrated because I felt that I was unable to help

her. Additionally, when she expressed her dismay with her field experiences, a large part of me wanted to defend *my* teacher education program. I was not only their instructor but I also served as the assistant to the undergraduate program coordinator and, therefore, I became very familiar with this teacher preparation program and was aware of all of the mechanisms (i.e. key assessments linked to field experiences, diverse field placements, etc.) that were put into place in order to ensure we graduated only qualified special educators. I was proud of our program but, as the researcher, that pride had to be placed aside and my new role was to listen to the participant's responses and capture their experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Expert Review of Propositions

Feedback from Expert Reviewer 1

Proposition – Beginning Special Educators	Feedback	Response
Assumption: Beginning special educators require an extensive amount of support in order to remain in the field.	Include “range of knowledge”	No revision will be made. The propositions that support this assumption is specific to support, not knowledge in instruction.

<p>Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers. b. beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads. c. beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs. 	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>Include "behavioral needs"</p>	<p>No revision will be made. According to the literature, beginning special education teachers struggle most with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs. However, literature specific to behavior is limited.</p>
<p>Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to become the teacher they are now which results in disequilibrium.</p>	<p>"the teacher they are now" requires clarification</p>	<p>Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to develop their current teaching expectations and beliefs which results in disequilibrium.</p>

<p>Beginning special education teachers experience challenges in adjusting to the school culture.</p>	<p>Proposition is unclear - Beginning special education teachers' post-school experiences conflict with their expectations of their school's climate.</p>	<p>Beginning special education teachers' post-school experiences conflict with their expectations of their school's climate.</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers.</p>	<p>Add "especially in light of implications of new initiatives and legislation."</p>	<p>Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers especially in light of implications of new initiatives and legislation.</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.</p>	<p>✓</p>	
<p>Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the necessary accommodations.</p>	<p>Remove "necessary" and replace with "appropriate and effective"</p>	<p>Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with appropriate and effective accommodations.</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. beginning special education teachers have difficulty accessing the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities). b. general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators. 	<p>Remove i.e.</p>	<p>No revision will be made. i.e. is required to provide examples of challenges special education teachers experience with general education teachers.</p>

Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.	✓	
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Proposition – Quality Induction Support	Feedback	Response
<p>Assumption: In order to help with teacher retention, quality induction support (QIS) is required for all beginning special education teachers. QIS, can be defined as various types of support provided to the beginning teacher for at least one school year. Such supports consist of quality mentors (quality mentor can be defined as an individual who is a special educator, has extensive knowledge on curriculum and instruction, and has the time to meet with the beginning special educator at least once a week informally), continued administrative support, a healthy school climate, and access to instructional resources for beginning special education teachers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ord choices (i.e. remove “continued” and replaced with “ongoing”) • dd “access to technology” • e specific as to when this year-long induction will be provided (i.e. after graduation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ord choices have been applied. • Access to technology” will not be added because it was not referred to in the literature. • After graduation” will not be added because all beginning teachers do not necessarily graduate from a teacher preparation program.
QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support.	✓	

<p>Retention of beginning special education teachers can be improved through QIS by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher. b. having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures. c. having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties. d. providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration. e. creating a healthy school climate. f. providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students. 	<p>Remove “throughout their first year of teaching”</p> <p>Unclear. Clarify.</p>	<p>No revision will be made. Based on the literature, administrative support throughout the first year of teaching contributes to the retention of beginning special education teacher.</p> <p>This proposition will be removed because it is redundant. According to the literature, a healthy school climate entails continued administrative support and providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students.</p>
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Proposition – Teacher Preparation	Feedback	Response
Assumption: preparation programs must infuse a variety of methods within their programs to successfully prepare preservice special education teachers.	✓	
Completion of teacher preparation programs increases teacher retention.	✓	
Teacher preparation programs connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).	✓	
Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.	✓	
Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.	✓	
Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.	✓	
Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching.	Specify how this mentorship is provided.	Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching through the use of online technology (i.e. Skype, i-chat) and observations.

Feedback from Expert Reviewer 2

Proposition – Beginning Special Educators	Feedback	Response
Assumption: Beginning special educators require an extensive amount of support in order to remain in the field.	✓	
<p>Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers. b. beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads (productive disequilibrium) c. beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students’ diverse learning and emotional needs. 	Requires clarification. Do the stressors cause this feeling of disequilibrium?	No revision will be made because the proposition indicates that stressors in the classroom contribute to feelings of productive disequilibrium.
Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to become the teacher they are now which results in productive disequilibrium.	Requires clarification.	Proposition has been revised to: Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to develop their current teaching expectations and beliefs which results in disequilibrium.

Beginning special education teachers experience challenges in adjusting to the school culture.	✓	
Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers.	✓	
Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.	✓	
Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the necessary accommodations.	✓	
<p>Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because:</p> <p>a. beginning special education teachers have difficulty accessing the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities).</p> <p>b. general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators.</p>	<p>Word choice</p> <p>Sweeping generalization</p>	<p>Changed to: beginning special education teachers face challenges in helping their students access the general education curriculum (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities).</p> <p>many general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators.</p>

Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.	✓	
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Proposition – Quality Induction Support	Feedback	Response
Assumption: In order to help with teacher retention, quality induction support (QIS) is required for all beginning special education teachers. QIS, can be defined as various types of support provided to the beginning teacher for at least one school year. Such supports consist of quality mentors (quality mentor can be defined as an individual who is a special educator, has extensive knowledge on curriculum and instruction, and has the time to meet with the beginning special educator at least once a week informally), continued administrative support, a healthy school climate, and access to instructional resources for beginning special education teachers.	✓	
QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support.	✓	

<p>Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher. b. having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures. c. having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties. d. providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration. e. creating a healthy school climate. f. providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students. 	<p>Unclear.</p>	<p>This proposition will be removed because it is redundant. According to the literature, a healthy school climate entails continued administrative support and providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students.</p>
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Proposition – Teacher Preparation	Feedback	Response
Assumption: preparation programs must infuse a variety of methods within their programs to successfully prepare preservice special education teachers.	Include the qualifier “Effective” before all propositions.	Revision will be made. After further consultation with major professor, revision will not be made. Focus of study is on teacher preparation programs and retention – not effectiveness.
Completion of teacher preparation programs increases teacher retention.	Did not feel that this proposition fit with the others in this category.	No revision will be made. 2 out of the 3 expert reviewers felt that it did belong.
Teacher preparation programs connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).	Field experiences is not the only factor which connects theory to practice.	Agreed. Change to: Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for teacher candidates to connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).
Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.	Word Choice: “provide”	Change to: Teacher preparation programs prepare special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.
Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.	✓	

Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.	✓	
Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching.	✓	

Expert Reviewer 3

Proposition – Beginning Special Educators	Feedback	Response
Assumption: Beginning special educators require an extensive amount of support in order to remain in the field.	✓	
<p>Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers. b. beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads (productive disequilibrium) c. beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students’ diverse learning and emotional needs. 	Include the lack of administrative support.	No revisions will be made. This proposition is addressed in the topic of quality induction support.

<p>Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to become the teacher they are now which results in productive disequilibrium.</p>	<p>Unclear. Clarify.</p>	<p>Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to develop their current teaching expectations and beliefs which results in disequilibrium.</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers experience challenges in adjusting to the school culture.</p>	<p>✓</p>	
<p>Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers.</p>	<p>✓</p>	
<p>Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.</p>	<p>✓</p>	
<p>Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the necessary accommodations.</p>	<p>✓</p>	
<p>Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. beginning special education teachers have difficulty accessing the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities). b. general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators. 	<p>Is this due to their lack of skills or what they have been taught in their teacher preparation programs?</p>	<p>No revisions will be made. This question will be addressed in the participant interviews.</p>

Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.	✓	
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Proposition – Quality Induction Support	Feedback	Response
Assumption: In order to help with teacher retention, quality induction support (QIS) is required for all beginning special education teachers. QIS, can be defined as various types of support provided to the beginning teacher for at least one school year. Such supports consist of quality mentors (quality mentor can be defined as an individual who is a special educator, has extensive knowledge on curriculum and instruction, and has the time to meet with the beginning special educator at least once a week informally), continued administrative support, a healthy school climate, and access to instructional resources for beginning special education teachers.	✓	
QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support.	✓	

<p>Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher. b. having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures. c. having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties. d. providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration. e. creating a healthy school climate. f. providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students. 	<p>Unclear. Clarify.</p>	<p>This proposition will be removed because it is redundant. According to the literature, a healthy school climate entails continued administrative support and providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students.</p>
--	--------------------------	--

Proposition – Teacher Preparation	Feedback	Response
Assumption: teacher preparation programs must infuse a variety of methods within their programs to successfully prepare preservice special education teachers.	Is this specific to only teacher preparation programs? Or does this include alternate certification programs.	For purposes of this study, literature and research is limited to only teacher preparation programs
Completion of teacher preparation programs increases teacher retention.		
Teacher preparation programs connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervising teaching).	Only field experiences connect theory to practice?	Change to: Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for teacher candidates to connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).
Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.	✓	
Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.	✓	
Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.	✓	
Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching.	✓	

Appendix B

Case Study Protocol

Overview of the Project:

The purpose of this study was to examine how quality induction service (QIS) and teacher preparation affected the experiences of a select group of first-year special education teachers. The unit of analysis in this study was a beginning special education teacher and the case to be studied was the same individual. This study further examined how participants' sense of self-efficacy and their levels of resiliency impacted their experiences. An exploratory case study methodology with multiple-case (cross-case) analysis (Yin, 2009) was used. A purposeful sample of nine first year special education teachers (multiple cases) was selected. Each participant was asked to participate in one interview. Interview questions have been created based on research-developed propositions.

Field Procedures:

1. I conducted one interview with each participant. The structured interview questions have been created based on the research-developed propositions and can be found below.
2. Each interview lasted approximately 45-55 mins.
3. The interviews took place after school hours and outside of school property.

4. Participant responses were audio taped by the researcher at the time of each interview and the researcher took copious field notes.
5. Interviews were transcribed and study participants were provided with the opportunity to examine the transcriptions for accuracy.
6. Prior to the start of each interview, the researcher administered Bandura's Teacher Self Efficacy Scale (1997) and the Resiliency Scale (Neil & Dias, 2001) to each participant.

Date of Interview	Time of Interview	Name of Participant	Location
5/25/11	2:00pm	Sue	Restaurant
5/26/11	4:30pm	Emma	Restaurant
5/27/11,	3:00pm	Terri	Restaurant
5/30/11	4:00pm	Brittany	Participant's home
5/31/11	4:45pm	Rachel	Researcher's office
6/3/11	10:00am	Tina	Restaurant
6/3/11	4:00pm	Lauren	Restaurant
6/7/11	4:15pm	Ava	Restaurant
6/8/11	4:00pm	Quinn	Restaurant

Data Analysis

For this study four levels of analysis were conducted.

First analytical level

1. Bandura's Teacher Efficacy Scale: For each participant, the mean score for all 30 items was determined. A mean score of 9 or closer indicates a strong level of efficacy

while a total mean score of 5 or below shows a deficient level of efficacy. The Resiliency Scale: A mean score of 7 or closer indicates a strong level of resiliency while a total mean score of 4 or below shows a minimal level of resiliency

Second analytical level

2 . Interviews: the researcher and one independent reviewer used the rating scale (Appendix F) to determine if the interview responses either supported or negated the research-based propositions (Duchnowski, Kutash, & Oliveira, 2004).

a) The researcher and reviewer were required to achieve a rate of agreement $\geq 80\%$.

In the case where that rate of agreement is not achieved, the researcher and reviewer are expected to meet to determine discrepancies in scoring and revise based on discussion and consensus

b) Participant responses were matched to each proposition and rated on a scale ranging from +3 to +1 in support of the proposition; -3 to -1 in opposition to the proposition; and 0 in which the data did not support or negate the propositions.

Third analytical level

3. Interview: using Appendix G as a guide, the researcher compared the participants' interview responses to the research-based propositions in order to (a) determine if there were patterns in experiences for beginning special education teachers and (b) to build a description of the experiences of beginning special education teachers.

a) In order to ensure reliability, the same reviewer compared the participants' interview responses to the propositions using Appendix E. The reviewer and researcher were required to achieve a rate of agreement $\geq 80\%$. In the case where that rate of agreement was not achieved, the reviewer and researcher

would then meet to determine discrepancies in scoring and revise based on discussion and consensus

Fourth analytical level

4. A cross-case synthesis was conducted. Once the word tables were created, the researcher was then able to develop cross-case conclusions about the study.

Questions

Research Question:

1. How does quality induction support (QIS) and teacher preparation affect the experiences of a select group of first year special education teachers?

This is a broad question which explored the following:

- a) How does their sense of self-efficacy impact their experiences as a first year special education teacher?
- b) How does their level of resiliency impact their experiences as a first year special education teacher?

Structured Interview Questions:

Quality Induction Service

1. What is your current role in the school?
 2. Please describe the characteristics of your school.
 - a) elementary school, middle school, or high school
 - b) high poverty school , low poverty school
 - c) diversity-low, equal, high
 3. How would you describe your role as a special education teacher?
 4. Please describe your teaching responsibilities
 - a) ESE case load
 - b) number of classes taught
 - c) instructional settings
 5. How would you describe your classroom(s)?
 6. What have been some of the successes you have experienced in your first year of teaching thus far? What have been the challenges? Please tell me how you navigated/overcame these challenges?
-

-
7. Please describe to me how you meet your students' needs?
- a) instructional strategies
 - b) learning strategies
 - c) resources
-
8. Please describe your experiences in collaborating with other teachers - general education and special education
- a) co-teaching
 - b) planning
 - c) accessing the general education curriculum for your students
-
9. Please describe to me your experiences in teaching the different content areas.
-
10. What have been the bridges or barriers in finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of your students?
-
11. Describe to me the instructional resources you use for your students.
-
12. What have been the bridges or barriers in adjusting to your school's culture?
-
13. Describe your school's induction process for beginning teachers (i.e. mentor, administrative support, team meetings)
-
14. Have you been provided with a mentor? What have been the bridges or barriers in working with your mentor?
-
15. Have you had any meetings with your administration? If so, please describe the reason for these meetings. Did you find these meetings to be helpful and beneficial?
-
16. How and where do you see yourself five years from now professionally?
-
17. True or False: Teaching is everything I thought it would be. Why?
-
18. Complete this sentence: First year teaching in special education is _____.
-
- Teacher Preparation**
-
19. When you first started the teacher preparation program, where did you envision yourself teaching? Describe the school and student population.
-
20. How did the field experiences in your program impact your first year of teaching?
-
21. Describe to me how you have applied what you learned in your teacher preparation program in your current classroom(s)
- a) classroom management
 - b) assessment
 - c) individualizing instruction,
 - d) collaboration.
-
22. Describe to me how your teacher preparation program prepared you to teach the general education curriculum content and pedagogy.
-
23. Tell me what you know now that you wish you learned in your teacher preparation program.
-
24. Do you feel that your teacher preparation program provides you with mentorship throughout your first year of teaching? If so, how? If not, what are some ways your preparation program can mentor you?
-

Appendix C

BANDURA'S INSTRUMENT TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinions about each of the statements below by circling the appropriate number. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name.

Efficacy to Influence Decision making

How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you express your views freely on important school matters?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

Efficacy to Influence School Resources

How much can you do to get the instructional materials and equipment you need?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

Instructional Self-Efficacy

How much can you do to influence the class sizes in your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to promote learning when there is lack of support from the home?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to keep students on task on difficult assignments?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to increase students' memory of what they have been taught in previous lessons?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get students to work together?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to overcome the influence of adverse community conditions on students' learning?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get children to do their homework?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

Disciplinary Self-Efficacy

How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to prevent problem behavior on the school grounds?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

Efficacy to Enlist Parental Involvement

How much can you do to get parents to become involved in school activities?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you assist parents in helping their children do well in school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to make parents feel comfortable coming to school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

Efficacy to Enlist Community Involvement

How much can you do to get community groups involved in working with the schools?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get churches involved in working with the school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get businesses involved in working with the school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get local colleges and universities involved in working with the school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate

How much can you do to make the school a safe place?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to make students enjoy coming to school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get students to trust teachers?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you help other teachers with their teaching skills?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administration to make the school run effectively?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to reduce school dropout?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to reduce school absenteeism?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Nothing Very Little Some Influence Quite a Bit A Great Deal

How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Nothing Very Little Some Influence Quite a Bit A Great Deal

Appendix D

RS₁₅

Please circle a number indicating how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

Disagree

Agree

1. When I make plans I follow through with them.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. I usually manage one way or another.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I feel proud that I have accomplished things in my life.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. I usually take things in my stride.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. I am friends with myself.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I feel that I can handle many things at a time.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. I am determined.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. I have self-discipline.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. I keep interested in things.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. I can usually find something to laugh about. .
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disagree

Agree

11. My belief in myself gets me through hard times.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I can usually look at a situation in a number of ways.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. My life has meaning.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. When I am in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. I have enough energy to do what I have to do.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix E

Structured Interview Questions

Quality Induction Service

1. What is your current role in the school?

2. Please describe the characteristics of your school.
 - a) elementary school, middle school, or high school
 - b) high poverty school , low poverty school
 - c) diversity-low, equal, high

3. How would you describe your role as a special education teacher?

4. Please describe your teaching responsibilities
 - a) ESE case load
 - b) number of classes taught
 - c) instructional settings

5. How would you describe your classroom(s)?

6. What have been some of the successes you have experienced in your first year of teaching thus far? What have been the challenges? Please tell me how you navigated/overcame these challenges?

7. Please describe to me how you meet your students' needs?
 - a) instructional strategies
 - b) learning strategies
 - c) resources

8. Please describe your experiences in collaborating with other teachers - general education and special education
 - a) co-teaching
 - b) planning
 - c) accessing the general education curriculum for your students

9. Please describe to me your experiences in teaching the different content areas.

10. What have been the bridges or barriers in finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of your students?

11. Describe to me the instructional resources you use for your students.

12. What have been the bridges or barriers in adjusting to your school's culture?

13. Describe your school's induction process for beginning teachers (i.e. mentor, administrative support, team meetings)

14. Have you been provided with a mentor? What have been the bridges or barriers in working with your mentor?

15. Have you had any meetings with your administration? If so, please describe the reason for these meetings. Did you find these meetings to be helpful and beneficial?

16. How and where do you see yourself five years from now professionally?

17. True or False: Teaching is everything I thought it would be. Why?

18. Complete this sentence: First year teaching in special education is _____.

Teacher Preparation

19. When you first started the teacher preparation program, where did you envision yourself teaching? Describe the school and student population.

20. How did the field experiences in your program impact your first year of teaching?

21. Describe to me how you have applied what you learned in your teacher preparation program in your current classroom(s)

- a) classroom management
 - b) assessment
 - c) individualizing instruction,
 - d) collaboration.
-

22. Describe to me how your teacher preparation program prepared you to teach the general education curriculum content and pedagogy.

23. Tell me what you know now that you wish you learned in your teacher preparation program.

24. Do you feel that your teacher preparation program provides you with mentorship throughout your first year of teaching? If so, how? If not, what are some ways your preparation program can mentor you?

Appendix F

Interview Rating Scale

Participant: _____

Rater: _____

1. Beginning Special Educators

Assumption: Beginning special educators require an extensive amount of support in order to remain in the field.

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the following parts of the proposition. If data support or are against the statement, rate the evidence as strong, moderate, or mild by circling either +3, +2, +1, -3, -2, or -1. If the data have no evidence about the statement then circle no.	The data provide evidence that SUPPORTS the statement. The evidence is...			The data provide evidence that is AGAINST the statement. The evidence is...			The data DO NOT provide any evidence about the statement	TOTAL
Parts of the Proposition (Indicators):	Strong	Moderate	Mild	Strong	Moderate	Mild	None	
A) Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the following parts of the proposition. If data support or are against the statement, rate the evidence as strong, moderate, or mild by circling either +3, +2, +1, -3, -2, or -1. If the data have no evidence about the statement then circle no.	The data provide evidence that <u>SUPPORTS</u> the statement. The evidence is...			The data provide evidence that is <u>AGAINST</u> the statement. The evidence is...			The data <u>DO NOT</u> provide any evidence about the statement	TOTAL
	Strong	Moderate	Mild	Strong	Moderate	Mild	None	
B) Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads (productive disequilibrium)	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
C) Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
D) Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to develop their current teaching expectations and beliefs which result in disequilibrium.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
E) Beginning special education teachers' post-school experiences conflict with their expectations of their schools' climates.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the following parts of the proposition. If data support or are against the statement, rate the evidence as strong, moderate, or mild by circling either +3, +2, +1, -3, -2, or -1. If the data have no evidence about the statement then circle no.	The data provide evidence that <u>SUPPORTS</u> the statement. The evidence is...			The data provide evidence that is <u>AGAINST</u> the statement. The evidence is...			The data <u>DO NOT</u> provide any evidence about the statement	TOTAL
	Strong	Moderate	Mild	Strong	Moderate	Mild	None	
F) Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers especially in light of implication of new initiatives and legislation.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
G) Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
H) Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the necessary accommodations.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
I) Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because beginning special education teachers face challenges in helping their students access the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities).	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the following parts of the proposition. If data support or are against the statement, rate the evidence as strong, moderate, or mild by circling either +3, +2, +1, -3, -2, or -1. If the data have no evidence about the statement then circle no.	The data provide evidence that <u>SUPPORTS</u> the statement. The evidence is...			The data provide evidence that is <u>AGAINST</u> the statement. The evidence is...			The data <u>DO NOT</u> provide any evidence about the statement	TOTAL
	Strong	Moderate	Mild	Strong	Moderate	Mild	None	
J) Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
K) Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	

Duchnowski, A., Kutash, K., & Oliveira, B. (2004). A Systemic Examination of School Improvement Activities that Include Special Education. Remedial and Special Education. 25(2), 117-129

Participant: _____

Rater: _____

2. Quality Induction Support

Assumption: In order to help with teacher retention, quality induction support (QIS) is required for all beginning special education teachers. QIS, can be defined as various types of support provided to the beginning teacher for at least one school year. Such supports consist of quality mentors (quality mentor can be defined as an individual who is a special educator, has extensive knowledge on curriculum and instruction, and has the time to meet with the beginning special educator at least once a week informally), ongoing administrative support, a healthy school climate, and access to instructional resources for beginning special education teachers.

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the following parts of the proposition. If data support or are against the statement, rate the evidence as strong, moderate, or mild by circling either +3, +2, +1, -3, -2, or -1. If the data have no evidence about the statement then circle no.	The data provide evidence that SUPPORTS the statement. The evidence is...			The data provide evidence that is AGAINST the statement. The evidence is...			The data DO NOT provide any evidence about the statement	TOTAL
	Strong	Moderate	Mild	Strong	Moderate	Mild	None	
Parts of the Proposition (Indicators): A) QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
B) Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
C) Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the following parts of the proposition. If data support or are against the statement, rate the evidence as strong, moderate, or mild by circling either +3, +2, +1, -3, -2, or -1. If the data have no evidence about the statement then circle no.	The data provide evidence that SUPPORTS the statement. The evidence is...			The data provide evidence that is AGAINST the statement. The evidence is...			The data DO NOT provide any evidence about the statement	TOTAL
	Strong	Moderate	Mild	Strong	Moderate	Mild	None	
D) Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
E) Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
G) Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	

Duchnowski, A., Kutash, K, & Oliveira, B. (2004). A Systemic Examination of School Improvement Activities that Include Special Education. Remedial and Special Education. 25(2), 117-129

Participant: _____

Rater: _____

3. Teacher Preparation

Assumption: Completion of teacher preparation programs increases teacher retention.

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the following parts of the proposition. If data support or are against the statement, rate the evidence as strong, moderate, or mild by circling either +3, +2, +1, -3, -2, or -1. If the data have no evidence about the statement then circle no.	The data provide evidence that SUPPORTS the statement. The evidence is...			The data provide evidence that is AGAINST the statement. The evidence is...			The data DO NOT provide any evidence about the statement	TOTAL
	Strong	Moderate	Mild	Strong	Moderate	Mild	None	
Parts of the Proposition (Indicators):								
A) Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities to connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
B) Teacher preparation programs prepare special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
C) Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
D) Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	
E) Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching (i.e. Skype conferences and observations).	+3	+2	+1	-3	-2	-1	0	

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the following parts of the proposition. If data support or are against the statement, rate the evidence as strong, moderate, or mild by circling either +3, +2, +1, -3, -2, or -1. If the data have no evidence about the statement then circle no.	The data provide evidence that <u>SUPPORTS</u> the statement. The evidence is...			The data provide evidence that is <u>AGAINST</u> the statement. The evidence is...			The data <u>DO NOT</u> provide any evidence about the statement	TOTAL
Parts of the Proposition (Indicators):	Strong	Moderate	Mild	Strong	Moderate	Mild	None	

Duchnowski, A., Kutash, K., & Oliveira, B. (2004). A Systemic Examination of School Improvement Activities that Include Special Education. Remedial and Special Education. 25(2), 117-12

Appendix G

Pattern-Matching Logic

Beginning Special Educators Propositions	Yes	No	Mixed
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers.			
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads (productive disequilibrium).			
Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs.			
Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to develop their current teaching expectations and beliefs which result in disequilibrium.			
Beginning special education teachers' post-school experiences conflict with their expectations of their schools' climates.			
Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers especially in light of new initiatives and legislation.			
Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.			
Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the appropriate and effective accommodations.			

Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because beginning special education teachers have challenges in collaborating with general education teachers because beginning special education teachers face challenges in accessing the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities).

Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators.

Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.

Quality Induction Propositions	Yes	No	Mixed
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QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support.

Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher.

Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures.

Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties.

Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration.

Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students.

Teacher Preparation

Yes

No

Mixed

Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for teachers to connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).

Teacher preparation programs prepare special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.

Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.

Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.

Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching (i.e. Skype conferences and observations).

Appendix H

Linking Propositions to Interview Questions

1. Beginning Special Education Teacher	
Indicators:	Interview Question(s)
<p>Beginning special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than general educators because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. beginning special education teachers often experience isolation from other teachers. b. beginning special education teachers have difficulty connecting what they learned in their teacher preparation programs to their own classrooms due to unexpected classroom events such as last minute changes in teaching assignments, lack of instructional resources, and increased case loads c. beginning special education teachers struggle with meeting their students' diverse learning and emotional needs. 	<p>Questions: 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16</p>
<p>Beginning teachers use their past experiences as a student and their current experiences to develop their current teaching expectations and beliefs which result in disequilibrium.</p>	<p>Question(s): 17, 18, 19, 23</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers' post-school experiences conflict with their expectations of their schools' climates.</p>	<p>Question(s): 12, 17, 18, 23</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers experience ambiguity in their roles as special education teachers especially in light of new initiatives and legislation.</p>	<p>Question(s): 3, 6</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers have concerns about their own knowledge of content.</p>	<p>Question(s): 9</p>

<p>Beginning special education teachers have concerns about successfully teaching content to their students, as well as providing them with the appropriate and effective accommodations.</p>	<p>Question(s): 9, 10</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers have challenges collaborating with general education teachers because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. beginning special education teachers have challenges in collaborating with general education teachers because beginning special education teachers face challenges in accessing the general education curriculum for their students (i.e. students with disabilities are excluded rather than included, general educators have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities). b. general educators are unwilling to collaborate and plan instruction with special educators. 	<p>Question(s): 8</p>
<p>Beginning special education teachers struggle with finding and implementing appropriate academic and behavior management strategies to meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of their students.</p>	<p>Question(s): 10</p>
<p>2. Induction and Mentorship</p>	
<p>QIS can reduce stress for beginning special education teachers because it provides needed support.</p>	<p>Question(s): 12, 13, 14, 15</p>

<p>Retention of beginning special education teacher can be improved through QIS by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. providing beginning special education teachers with a quality mentor, which reduces stress and anxiety for the beginning special education teacher. b. having quality mentors assist beginning special education teachers to successfully navigate school policies and procedures. c. having quality mentors meet with beginning special educator teachers and discuss how they will manage their workload and administrative duties. d. providing administrative support to beginning special education teachers throughout their first year of teaching by conducting regularly scheduled meetings to share and address questions and concerns between faculty and administration. e. providing beginning special education teachers with the necessary instructional resources for teaching their students. 	<p>Question(s): 12, 13, 14, 15</p>
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3. Teacher Preparation

<p>Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for teachers to connect theory to practice by infusing extensive field experiences throughout their programs (i.e. observations and supervised teaching).</p>	<p>Question(s): 20</p>
<p>Teacher preparation programs prepare special education teacher candidates with the knowledge of general education curriculum content and pedagogy.</p>	<p>Question(s): 22</p>
<p>Teacher preparation programs provide special education teacher candidates with strategies to build collaboration with general educators.</p>	<p>Questions(s): 21</p>
<p>Teacher preparation programs focus on preparing their teacher candidates to teach to a diverse student population.</p>	<p>Question(s): 21</p>

Teacher preparation programs provide continued mentorship to their graduates throughout their first year of teaching (i.e. Skype conferences and observations).

Question(s):
24

Appendix I

Results of Inter-Rater Reliability

Case	Beginning Special Educator			Quality Induction Support			Teacher Preparation		
	Researcher	Reviewer	Agree	Researcher	Reviewer	Agree	Researcher	Reviewer	Agree
Pilot: Sue	----	----	100%	----	----	100%	----	----	100%
Case 1: Emma	----	----	100%	----	----	100%	----	----	100%
Case 2: Terri	Prop A -2 Prop B -2	Prop A -3 Prop B -3	Agree -2 Wording of response Agree -2 Wording of response	-----	----	100%	-----	-----	100%
Case 3: Tina	-----	-----	100%	-----	-----	100%	-----	----	100%
Case 4: Brittany	-----	-----	100%	-----	-----	100%	-----	----	100%
Case 5: Rachel	----	----	100%	----	----	100%	----	----	100%

Case 6: Lauren	Prop D +2	Prop D +1	Agree +2 Wording of response	----	----	100%	----	----	100%
	Prop E +2	Prop E +1	Agree +2 Wording of response						
Case 7: Ava	Prop D +2	Prop D +1	Disagree +2 Wording of response						
	Prop G -3	Prop G -2	Agree -3 Wording of response						
	Prop J +3	Prop J +2	Agree +3 Wording of response						
Case 8: Quinn	----	----	100%	----	----	100%	----	----	100%
Total Agreement			91%	100%			100%		