

# Annotated Bibliography: Special Education Educators and Paperwork Responsibilities<sup>1</sup>

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- Amprey, Walter G. Addressing the Special Education Crisis. (2005). AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice, v2 n2 p30-31 Sum 2005

In the author's past work as a superintendent, and in his current capacity as an educational consultant, he has seen hundreds of dollars (per special education student) wasted in unnecessary costs and lost funding opportunities resulting from out-of-date, ineffective management systems. In addition to the fiscal implications, this imposes considerable costs to teachers and students every year. The solution according to Amprey, is technology. **Technology-based systems can reduce the administrative burden of special education paperwork and compliance, reduce costs, increase accountability, and achieve mandated gains.** This article offers some examples that drive home this point.

[http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/AASA\\_Journal\\_of\\_Scholarship\\_and\\_Practice/Summer\\_2005\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/AASA_Journal_of_Scholarship_and_Practice/Summer_2005_FINAL.pdf)

- Ahearn, Eileen. (2011). Paperwork in Special Education: Survey Findings. inForum. Project Forum. National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

In 2002, Project Forum conducted a survey on special education forms and a policy forum on the issue of paperwork in special education. Some recommendations that resulted from those activities were included in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA. With a new reauthorization pending, the topic has again aroused interest. This document presents the **findings from a survey of states on current observations and beliefs in areas related to the perceived burden of paperwork on special education.** It was completed as part of the Cooperative Agreement between Project Forum at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

The report revisits previous work on this topic conducted in 2002. In September 2011, a new survey was directed to state directors of special education asking a series of questions about paperwork related to IEP, effect of technology and sources of current paper work. Although the responses focused on state level activities, the respondents recommended the following: ***“reduce paperwork for teachers....excessive amounts of paperwork are driving teachers out of the field.”***

<http://www.nasdse.org/publications-t577/paperwork-in-special-education-survey-findings.aspx>

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<sup>1</sup> Based on results of on-line search using keywords special education teacher paperwork, or special education paperwork burden. With few exceptions, almost all of the work summarized was published since 2005. The exceptions were included if study was published during 2000-2005 and directly related to the topic.

- Compton, Robert Hugh. (2013). Factors That Influence Burnout Among South Carolina's Special Education Teachers ProQuest Dissertation. NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY, 2013, 129 pages; 3538179

Special education teacher burnout has a negative impact not only on the school district, but also on the outcomes of children with disabilities. Successful special education programs are effective because they are able to retain highly qualified teachers. It is critical to understand what conditions contribute to special education teachers making the choice to not renew their teaching contracts.

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine if a relationship existed between burnout among special education teachers in South Carolina and six predictor variables. The target population for this study was the 5,757 special education teachers in South Carolina who taught during the 2010-2011 school year. A total of 347 usable surveys, or six percent of the target population, were returned. The quantitative portion was administered via an online survey that contained a researcher-created demographic survey form and the Job Satisfaction Survey.

Based on the findings from the qualitative portion of the study, special education teachers who renewed their contract did so because they were either satisfied with their job, passionate about their profession, or ambivalent. Special education teachers who did not renew their contracts did so because either they were involuntarily re-assigned to an unfavorable position, unsatisfied with the amount of paperwork, or did not feel supported by their administrators. These findings support the findings of other studies in the area of special education teacher burnout in that there is no consensus about the relationship between special education teacher characteristics and attrition. Further research should consider incorporating a smaller, more comprehensive qualitative study concentrating on the characteristics of the special education teacher in order to gain a more in-depth insight into the stressors of the special education profession

- Green, Joseph David. (2011). Factors Related to Special Education Teacher Job Commitment: A Study of One Large Metropolitan School District in Southern California. Pepperdine University. Access via ProQuest Dissertation Database.

Researchers have focused their attention on the subject of special education teacher attrition for many years. While these researchers have made valuable findings, the need to abate the staggering numbers of special education teachers who leave the field still exists. Districts desiring to retain their teachers must place greater emphasis on the development of evidence-based strategies to reduce teacher attrition (Billingsley, 2004). The purposes of this study were to: (a) provide an overview of the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers' demographic characteristics; (b) identify the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job satisfaction and stress are related to perceptions of job commitment among current special

education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California; (c) identify the common reasons/conditions expressed by current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California for wanting to leave teaching special education; and (d) identify the reported career plans of current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California.

This study employed a survey design. The target population for this study was the over 4,000 full-time special education teachers (as designated by district criteria) employed by a large metropolitan school district in Southern California. Data analysis included both quantitative (descriptive statistics, correlation, ANOVA, multiple regression) and qualitative techniques (coding and sorting responses into themes).

The findings of this study suggest the following demographic variables are related to job commitment: being female, Hispanic, and teaching students with eligibilities other than learning disabilities in an elementary setting. Job satisfaction was positively correlated with job commitment and career longevity, but negatively correlated with job stress. In addition, job stress was negatively correlated with both with job satisfaction and career longevity. Also, job satisfaction and career longevity were positively correlated. The most frequently indicated factors related to wanting to leave the field included lack of administrative support, workload issues, salary issues, paperwork issues, class size issues, lack of parent involvement, negative school climate, inadequate resources, lack of respect or prestige, student discipline issues, lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making, lack of time to interact with colleagues, lack of community support, negative teacher-teacher relationships, and negative teacher-student relationships. The majority of the special education teachers who participated in this study indicated that they planned to remain in their job at least until retirement. For those who planned to leave within the next 3 to 5 years, the most frequently indicated reasons (in order of popularity) were retirement, followed by obtaining a promotion within school or district, seeking employment in a non-teaching job in education, and teaching special education in another district.

- Hampton, Jessica Daneen. (2013). Examining Factors that Decrease Attrition Among Special Educators. WALDEN UNIVERSITY, 2013, 140 pages; 3594538, Access via ProQuest Dissertation Data base.

Recruiting and retaining special educators has been a major concern for the department of education, school administration, and parents across the United States. Attrition, defined as the exit of teachers from their positions, has been a contributing factor to the shortage of teachers. The theoretical foundation for this study was based on the conceptual model of attrition proposed by Billingsley, Brownell, and Smith, who explored teacher characteristics and personal factors, teacher qualifications, work environment factors, and affective reactions to work. The purpose of this study was to better understand the factors that contribute to the attrition rate of special educators. The research questions that guided this study investigated the influence of factors such as motivation, support, and job design on the attrition of special educators. A correlational research design was

used to analyze the data from a convenience sample of 97 special education teachers who work with students with emotional behavior disorders. Positive relationships were found to exist between attrition and working conditions, compensation, paperwork, administrative support, and time to perform job tasks, suggesting that special educators will be more inclined to remain in their positions when these factors are favorable. Based on these results, it is recommended that school administrators implement policies to enhance the school climate and increase the level of administrative support. Employing these policies can provide a long-term positive social change by increasing special educator retention rates and promoting improved academic and social outcomes for students, schools, and communities.

Klein, Sheri. (2004). Reducing Special Education Paperwork. Principal, v84 n1 p58-60 Sep-Oct 2004

"I find that the paperwork that is required for all general education teachers to be the least burdensome because it's paperwork that comes with the job...It's the additional special education paperwork that I find most burdensome because I have to generate the same information and repeat it over and over on different forms."

- Leko, Melinda M.; Smith, Stephen W. (2010). Retaining Beginning Special Educators: What Should Administrators Know and Do? Intervention in School and Clinic, v45 n5 p321-325 2010

The experiences that beginning special education teachers encounter moving from the pre-service environment into the first year of classroom teaching put them in a uniquely tenuous position that could lead to leaving the classroom after only a few years of teaching. District- and school-level administrators can influence the retention rates of beginning special educators by encouraging a welcoming and supportive school climate that facilitates collaboration among teachers, other school personnel, and parents. Administrators can promote induction by focusing on the instructional and material needs of beginning special educators that match their varied teaching assignments. Assigning a mentor who is knowledgeable about special education practices and policies and who is available for brief but frequent meetings will help reduce confusion, frustration, or lack of confidence new teachers may feel as they begin their teaching experience. Providing beginning special educators with opportunities to advance their knowledge through professional development can promote a sense of preparedness in a variety of teaching situations.

Administrators can reduce beginners' stress levels by monitoring caseload and paperwork burdens. Noting the difficulties of filling special education positions in their schools, administrators have at their disposal multiple and effective strategies to retain practicing special education teachers, especially those new to the profession. Focused and individualized attention on beginning special education teachers, who are most vulnerable to attrition, can improve the retention of their services over a long period of time and ultimately improve the services for students with disabilities.

- Mehrenberg, Richard L. (2013). Red Tape and Green Teachers: The Impact of Paperwork on Novice Special Education Teachers. International Journal of Special Education, v28 n1 p80-87 2013

Eighteen novice special education teachers were interviewed regarding their opinions, experiences, and advice regarding professional paperwork such as IEPs, behavior plans, and annual goals. A qualitative analysis of the responses suggests three main findings: (1.) Participants had a negative opinion of paperwork based on its lengthiness and perceived irrelevancy to instruction. (2.) Participants cited mentors, peers, and practice, as the best ways to learn about paperwork. (3.) Recommended paperwork advice for new teachers were to understand expectation, ask for help, and get organized. Implications and recommendations are discussed.

- Menlove, Ronda; Garnes, Lori; Salzberg, Charles. (2003). A Qualified Teacher for Every Student: Keeping the Good Ones.

Utah is experiencing chronic, critical, special-educator shortages in all positions and disability areas, including speech and language pathologists and school psychologists. The Utah Attrition Study found that the most common reason for special education professionals leaving positions was "moving out of state," followed by personal reasons. The largest area of potentially preventable attrition was "transferring to a general education teaching position." A study examining why Utah special education teachers leave to become general education teachers surveyed 51 Utah teachers who had left special education.

Results indicated that although the teachers were satisfied with the instructional aspects of their work, they were dissatisfied with the non-instructional aspects of special education teaching, particularly paperwork. Another study examined why special education teachers stay on the job, surveying 812 Utah special education teachers with 10 or more years of teaching experience. More than 91.5 percent of these teachers were satisfied with the instructional aspects of teaching, but only 44.4 percent were satisfied with the non-instructional aspects. While overall, teachers felt supported, more support with paperwork would be helpful. Potential strategies to prevent special education teachers from transferring include increasing support from principals and administrators, using technology and organizational skills to help manage paperwork loads, ongoing in-service training and continued education regarding best practices for managing stress, and mentoring or professional peer coaching to pass on skills learned in the classroom.

- Meller, Jennifer T. (2011). The effects of a special education electronic data system: How urban special education teachers in K--8 settings use data to create knowledge. ProQuest Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania

While there has been some research detailing the difficulties that special educators have with compiling the complex paperwork required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandate, little has been written about how technology weighs into this framework, or how teachers use data to assist with their instructional planning.. This study explores in what ways, and to what extent, one special education technology system, EasyIEP(TM), impacted the work of special education teachers in the School District of Philadelphia (SDP). Through a mixed-methods approach, consisting of interviews with principals and special education teachers and surveys administered to special education teachers, this study documents the experiences that teachers had as they infused

EasyIEP(TM) into their daily work and came to understand special education through its lens. The findings of this study serve to: 1) document the benefits and flaws of the web-based tool as it relates to special education teachers' work; 2) describe the extent to which special education teachers' instructional, procedural and regulatory, and data informed practices were informed by their use of EasyIEP(TM); and 3) demonstrate how EasyIEP(TM) guided conversations among teacher groups and administrators, contributing to a more knowledgeable and inclusive school community. The divergent experiences of low incidence and high incidence special education teachers in this context were also explored. Further, this research offers a complex, multi-faceted understanding of how one web-based system works in context in a large urban district and offers a detailed account of the challenges facing special educators, from legal compliance, to instructional planning, to data informed discussions and inclusive practices, as seen through the analysis of a practitioner/researcher. The implications and recommendations for schools interest in implementing web-based systems included: offering consultation and training to district and training special educators and other school leaders on data, technology, and special education practices.

- Milligan, Julie; Neal, Gwen; Singleton, Jacques. (2012). Administrators of Special and Gifted Education: Preparing Them for the Challenge. *Education*, v133 n1 p171-180 Fall 2012

Since the initiation of PL 94-142 enacted by the United States Congress in 1975, special education has been mandated, funded and regulated by the federal government. There have been both benefits and drawbacks to this initiative. In positive terms and most importantly, children who require different educational services are identified, and programs with trained personnel are provided. As a result of the federal mandate, schools receive federal funds to operate programs for children who need special services. Some might contend, however, that with mandates and funds, the regulatory processes are a burden to educators and get in the way of serving the learning needs of children (Perkins, 2011).

[http://www.projectinnovation.biz/education\\_2006.html](http://www.projectinnovation.biz/education_2006.html)

- Morrison, Nancy Jeanne. (2010). The Effects of Induction, Mentoring and Local School Culture on Retention of Beginning Special Education Teachers. ProQuest LLC, Ph.D. Dissertation, George Mason University

A mixed-methods study was conducted to determine the effects of induction, mentoring and local school supports on the retention of beginning special education teachers. A random nationwide sample of 477 elementary and secondary special education teachers with five years' experience or less completed a web-based survey of 35 open and forced choice items to determine their perceptions of the effectiveness of supports from induction programs, mentors, and local schools. A representative subsample of respondents participated in follow-up interviews. Respondents were 86% white, 84% female, median age 33, and were representative of previous research with respect to race/ethnicity, gender, age, and teacher preparation programs. Respondents taught students from a wide range of disability groups in a variety of teaching settings. Respondents reported induction programs and mentors to be somewhat effective, although induction activities and

frequency of participation varied. The majority of respondents had special education teacher mentors.

Job design and working conditions were identified as areas of concern because of heavy student caseloads, paperwork demands, lack of planning time, and numbers of daily class preparations. Administrative support was perceived as somewhat effective, and colleague support most often came from other special education teachers or mentors. Respondents reported equivocal views of collaborating with general education teachers. Local school cultures were generally viewed as positive, but were sometimes perceived as less inclusive for special education teachers and students. Statistically significant differences were found between mentoring effectiveness and secondary teachers, between administrative support and elementary teachers, and between job satisfaction and teachers' intent to remain in teaching 15 years or longer. No statistically significant differences were found for induction effectiveness. Recommendations from respondents for supporting beginning special education teachers included improved professional development, administrators with knowledge of special education, reduced student caseloads and paperwork demands, and inclusion of special educators in the school wide learning community. Additionally, respondents described the many reasons they like being special education teachers. Findings are discussed with respect to policy and practice implications as well as implications for future research. [The dissertation citations contained here are published with the permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Copies of dissertations may be obtained by Telephone (800) 1-800-521-0600. Web

- Nance, Erica. Raymond L. Calabrese. (2009). "Special education teacher retention and attrition: the impact of increased legal requirements", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 23 Iss: 5, pp.431 - 440

The purpose of this paper is to describe the reasons current or former tenured special education teachers in a Local Education Agency remain or leave their special education teaching positions through the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture. The paper aims to describe the influence of increased legal requirements on current or former tenured special education teacher attrition or retention by reporting their reasons for staying or leaving.

A qualitative multiple case study of two units of analysis was conducted through a constructionist epistemology. Data were collected from 40 current and former tenured special education teachers through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, the Left Hand and Right-Hand Column Case Method, and review of appropriate documents. The data collected were analyzed using text analysis software, content analysis, and pattern matching.

Four salient findings from the paper are: current tenured special education teachers want to be listened to and have their needs considered; current tenured special education teachers feel overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments; current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice; and current and former tenured special education teachers perceive that time requirements for administrative tasks



reduce time for student services. Implications for praxis include organizational learning and organizational culture that encourage listening to the experience of tenured special education teachers and including them in decisions that affect them in an effort to retain them.

- National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development. (2010) The Challenge of Managing Roles: Understanding the Needs of Novice Special Education Teachers. Induction Insights. Supporting Special Education Teachers - Administrators

The learning curve is high for novice special education teachers. They must assume full teaching responsibilities, while at the same time become familiar with district and school policies, curriculum, and assessment policies and procedures. They are expected to build relationships with administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, families, and other service providers. For the most part, novice special education teachers have the same responsibilities as their more experienced counterparts, even though they may lack the knowledge and skills of their more experienced peers. The range and volume of responsibilities can seem insurmountable to novice special education teachers. In fact, many do not see their workloads as manageable. Challenging work conditions--such as an uncertainty about their roles and responsibilities, time pressures, heavy caseloads, scheduling difficulties, paperwork, and routine requirements--can contribute to their decision to leave teaching. An understanding of novice special education teachers' concerns can help administrators prepare mentors and plan more relevant induction programs. This Brief looks at these teachers' concerns related to managing their complex and challenging roles. It offers some suggestions that administrators might use to help new teachers succeed.

- Vannest, Kimberly J.; Hagan-Burke, Shanna; Parker, Richard I.; Soares, Denise A. (2011). Special Education Teacher Time Use in Four Types of Programs. Journal of Educational Research, v104 n4 p219-230 2011

The authors examined, by direct observation and 1 hr interval self-reporting, teacher time use in 4 types of special education programs (adaptive behavior units, content mastery, co-teaching, resource room). Over 7,000 pieces of data were collected across an academic year from 31 teachers in 24 schools within 9 districts in the Southwestern United States. Interrater reliability was established with concurrent observers visiting classrooms. Differences between program types were reliably established, with some of those differences anticipated and others not. Across programs, an average special education teacher time use profile also was plotted, with interesting findings including only 20% of class time spent on academic instruction and nearly 17% spent on special and general education paperwork. The implications are described for teachers and administrators and for policy.