TEACHER TURNOVER AMONG TEACHERS OF STUDENTS WITH
EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

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The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that compel teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD) to quit or stay in their job. Invitations to participate in the study were sent to a sample of educators from each the four census regions of the United States who currently work or have worked in the past worked with students with E/BD and have participated in one or more of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) professional development events.

A total of 156 educators responded to the online survey and 9 participated in the focus groups. Quantitative information generated from the survey was analyzed using frequency distributions and ANOVA, whereas, qualitative information were analyzed by summarizing and sorting information into different categories. The results were presented in narrative and tabular form and organized in response to each of the research questions.

The projected high teacher turnover as depicted in the findings, were mainly attributed to workplace variables and classroom conditions. Both variables are likely to be associated with high levels of dissatisfaction and lack of commitment eventually leading to decisions by teachers of students with E/BD to leave their job. Most respondents perceived themselves as being adequately prepared for responsibilities associated with teaching students with E/BD. The low variances associated with the grouping variable, career decisions did not explain a significant amount of variance in perceived levels of preparedness with regards to implementation of various program
components and instructional activities. Hence, teacher qualifications and perceptions did not play a significant role in career decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD.

In addition, findings reveal the need for all future teachers regardless of their certification to take specialized courses in special education to ensure that all teachers understand the unique characteristics and needs of students with E/BD. Respondents recommended that all pre-service teachers would benefit from actual hands-on training through structured field experiences and practicum.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Schools across the nation continuously face critical shortages of qualified teachers and resource personnel to work with children with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD). The field of special education is faced with the daunting task of creating a qualified, diverse, and stable teaching force to staff programs providing services for students with disabilities. This task is made even more challenging given the number of teachers who annually transfer to other positions or exit the profession (Billingsley, 2004a; U.S. Dept. of Education, 1998, 2004). The high annual special education teacher turnover has been attributed to a variety of factors such as transfer from special to general education (Billingsley, 2004b; Boe, Bobbitt & Cook, 1997), quitting public school teaching for other pursuits (Brownell, Smith, McNellis & Lenk, 1995; Kaff, 2004; McLesky, Tyler & Flippin, 2004) or quitting teaching for personal reasons (Billingsley, 2004a). Of primary concern is the exodus among teachers of students with E/BD who appear to leave at higher proportions than other special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004b).

Available research indicates that students with E/BD exhibit poorer outcomes than any other disability category for a variety of measures (e.g., academic achievement, graduation rates, employment, involvement with the juvenile justice system, mental health; Duchnowsky, 1994; Knitzer, Steinberg & Fleisch, 1990). Poor outcomes have been blamed on the students’ personal challenges (e.g., failing grades, school drop-out, suspension, attendance issues, delinquent behaviors, poor post-school outcomes) faced by these students that impair their school performance, psychosocial
adjustment, parent and peer relationships. Personal challenges are often complicated by complexities and intricacies of diversity in the classrooms that may warrant intervention from special education and occasionally mental health systems (Montgomery, 2001; Wagner et al., 2006).

Academic deficits exhibited by students with E/BD have been blamed on failure by schools to provide effective academic instruction. These deficits, if left unattended, lead to a negative developmental trajectory that continues in subsequent school years often leading to academic and behavioral challenges by students with E/BD (Hill & Barth, 2004). Consequently, the lack of effective instructional and classroom management skills have been blamed on the high levels of stress among both teachers and students. Due to the high stress levels, teachers often do very little teaching which, in turn, leads to students spending much of their time in off-task behavior which contributes to their poor academic outcomes (Abrams, 2005). Efforts to improve academic achievement and performance among students with E/BD should focus on staffing classrooms with teachers who possess the knowledge and skills to develop effective programs. Effective programming will help promote positive school experiences, strengthen educational accomplishments, and ultimately improve school outcomes for students with E/BD (Ingersoll, 2001).

Billingsley (2004b) argued that newly hired special education teachers (especially those with provisional or emergency certificates) were more likely to leave the profession during their first few years of work. Newly hired teachers are often expected to assume responsibilities previously held by experienced teachers that they may have replaced without any proper support or induction. This is in contrast to newly hired
professionals in other professions who are accorded adequate training and support by experienced professionals when newly hired (USDE-NCES, 2001). Efforts to reduce attrition among special education teachers especially teachers of students with E/BD should focus on improving the work environment with the hope of increasing professional commitment and job satisfaction.

Statement of the Problem

Public education in the US faces the challenge of recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. Teacher turnover may not be blamed on fewer teachers entering the profession but on too many leaving the profession (Colgan, 2004). Inability by schools to create and maintain quality teaching and learning environments has been blamed on the hiring of under qualified and unprepared teachers who often leave the profession in very high rates. Beginning teachers have an attrition rate of 14% and by the end of their 5th year the accumulated attrition rate is 46% (NCTAF, 2003). Ingersoll (2001) argued that teacher turnover was responsible for teacher shortages that periodically plague many schools, noting that special education teachers were more likely to transfer to positions within education or leave their jobs than any other group of teachers. Singer (1992) reported that teachers of students with learning disabilities were more stable often staying between 7-9 years compared to teachers of students with E/BD who often stayed for 5-6 years. In addition, special educators working with elementary students were reported to stay an average of 1.6 years longer than their colleagues working in middle and high schools.

High teacher turnover rates, specifically in programs serving students with E/BD, have been attributed to environmental/workplace variables. Efforts to reverse the
debilitating teacher turnover rates should focus on creating work environments that will sustain occupational stability especially among teachers of students with E/BD. Useem & Neild (2005) noted that it is impossible for school improvement efforts to succeed with a transient, inexperienced teaching staff. Hence, the need for special education teacher retention efforts to focus on the underlying reasons that lead to teacher turnover given the impact of teacher turnover has on the quality of programs offered to students with disabilities.

Purpose of the Study

Mounting teacher shortages as well as the use of unqualified individuals to fill teaching positions in the field of special education have been widely acknowledged. Strategies to ensure special education classrooms are staffed by quality teachers should focus on reversing the debilitating teacher turnover rates (Colgan, 2004). Given the current status of teacher supply and demand, teacher retention efforts should be integral to addressing the problem. Research studies acquiring feedback from educators who currently work or have left working with students with E/BD can help identify areas that need to be addressed in order for retention efforts to be successful (Otto & Arnold, 2005). This study investigated personal characteristics and work factors that compel teachers of students with E/BD to leave or stay in their job. Teacher perception of their level of preparedness with regards to implementation of specific program components and performing specific skills relevant to teaching students with E/BD and their relationship to future career decisions were also examined.

Significance of the Study

Studies on teacher attrition and retention have focused on the overall number of
special education teachers leaving the profession; however, information on teacher turnover within the field of E/BD is limited. Research on attrition and retention among the different groups of teachers is important because rates vary within the different disability categories (Singer, 1992). Evidence documenting special education teacher quality shortage is available (McLesky et al., 2004); however, little is known about the extent to which these teachers lack the skills to effectively address the needs of students with E/BD. To address these specific concerns, the study investigated the underlying factors responsible for high turnover rates among teachers of students with E/BD. This information will help policymakers understand factors contributing to career decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD in an effort to develop effective retention policies and practices.

Limitations

Given the magnitude of this study it was not possible to interview the entire sample of teachers. The study assumed that information derived from the selected sample would provide representative indications of teacher perceptions with regards to working with students with E/BD. Selection of the sample of teachers who work with students with E/BD should not be considered a flaw since the study was specifically interested in turnover rates among teachers of students with E/BD. Replications of this study among other disability categories may shed light on issues related to each specific disability group. Information collected from replication studies may be used to make comparisons before the results can be generalized for all students with disabilities.
Research Questions

The study sought to answer three research questions.

1. What causes teachers of students with E/BD to leave their positions?

2. What role does teacher qualification and perceived level of preparedness play in career decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD?

3. What are the pre-service and in-service training needs for teachers of students with E/BD?

Definition of Terms

- Attrition refers to teachers who express intent to leave (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff & Harniss, 2001; Singh & Billingsley, 1996) or those who transfer to other teaching or educational positions (Billingsley, 2004b; Hill & Barth, 2004)

- Eta (\(\eta\)) is an expression that provides a more accurate index on the magnitude of the relationship between two measured variables than other correlational statistics when the relationship is markedly nonlinear (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003) indicating the degree of curvilinear relationship (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996)

- A fully certified teacher refers to teachers who hold appropriate state certification or licensure for their position (McLeskey et al., 2004)

- Non-Certified/uncertified teacher refers to teachers employed or contracted on an emergency or provisional basis. These teachers do not hold state certification or licensure for the positions to which they are assigned (McLeskey et al., 2004)

- Retention refers to teachers who remain in the same teaching assignment and
the same school as the previous year (Billingsley, 2004a).

- Teacher turnover is a generic term that refers to all changes in teacher status from one year to the next (Boe, Bobbitt & Cook, 1997)
- Teacher quality in this context encompasses educational qualifications with full certification in the primary teaching assignment, good teaching that incorporates best practices and use of age appropriate strategies, upholds standards of the field and meets all expectations of the role leading to successful student outcomes (Blanton, Sindelar & Correa, 2006; McLeskey et al., 2004)
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The field of special education struggles with the long standing problem of finding, cultivating and retaining quality teachers. Schools districts nationwide continuously report critical teacher shortages that are more severe in special education programs (Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna & Flippin, 2002). Data from the U.S. Department of Education (2004) indicate that approximately 48,656 special education positions are filled teachers who do not have appropriate special education credentials. High teacher mobility presents devastating consequences to students with E/BD who often require a lot of assistance due to the critical learning opportunities they have lost in the past (George et al., 1995; Hill & Barth, 2004). The practice of employing unqualified teachers continues to be a costly venture to students with disabilities due to inadequate and poor quality services they provide (Billingsley, 2004b; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener & Weber, 1997; Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Available literature on teacher attrition and retention has focused on the overall category of special education; however, this study focused specifically on teachers of students with E/BD. The study investigated the personal characteristics, work conditions and teacher preparation factors that cause teachers of students with E/BD to leave their jobs. The study also examined the relationship between teacher perceived level of preparedness and their future career decisions. Computer searches were conducted using Academic Search Premier, EBSCO Host databases and dissertation abstracts. The review covered literature published from 1995 to present, however, literature published earlier than 1995 were included to clarify and support aspects of the study.
Conditions within the Work Environment

Teacher turnover in programs serving students with E/BD have been blamed on characteristics of the students (e.g., behavioral challenges, difficult-to-teach characteristics, poor outcomes) and the different conditions within the work environments (e.g., expectations that come with the job, role problems, accountability standards). The shortages of qualified special education teachers not only indicate that there are not enough qualified teachers to fill the vacant teaching positions, but teachers are choosing not to stay in the field (Olivarez & Arnold, 2006). Student characteristics and work conditions responsible for low teacher morale and ultimately lack of commitment among teachers of students with E/BD are reviewed in the section which follows.

Student Characteristics

The population of students with disabilities in the United States between the ages 3 to 12 years grew significantly through the 1990’s to present (USDE, 1998, 2002, 2004). During the same period, the number of students with E/BD grew at a much more rapid rate. Current estimates show that students with E/BD experience the highest dropout rates amongst all the other disability categories. Of the 51,474 students with E/BD aged 14 and above, only 16,530 students graduated with a diploma (USDE, 2004). The significant growth in students with disabilities, specifically those with E/BD, has been a significant factor in the increasing demand for qualified teachers. The U. S. Department of Education (2002) reported that fewer than 25% of students with E/BD, age 12 and older are in general education for 79% or more of a typical school day.

Behaviors exhibited by students with E/BD range from externalizing, acting-out
behaviors (e.g., verbal and physical aggression, opposition, hyperactivity, noncompliance and defiance) to internalizing behaviors (e.g., withdrawal, depression, anxiety, defensive tendencies) (Lane, Wehby, & Barton-Arwood, 2005). Students with E/BD often struggle with the issue of trust for adults and often expect rejection and failure due to previous experiences with peers and adults (Kauffman, 2005). They often possess limited insight into their behaviors (Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003) and often blame others for their behaviors (Abrams, 2005). Bullock & Gable (2006) reported that some students with E/BD lack the motivation and interest in education, whereas, others may be socially isolated exhibiting extreme cases of anxiety or phobia.

Students with E/BD are among the worst served of all students with disabilities in public schools (Jones, Dohrn & Dunn, 2004) given the nature of their disruptive behaviors that makes it a challenge to effectively address their needs (Bullock, 2004). Unfortunately, many educators have adopted the notion that behaviors have to be controlled before students can be taught which often shifts the focus from addressing educational needs to inappropriate behaviors (Wheby, Lane, & Falk, 2003). Patton, Jolivette & Ramsey, (2006) noted that failure to implement effective behavior management practices will result into teachers spending much time focused on managing behaviors at the expense of academic instruction.

Creative interventions beyond those typically available in general education classrooms may be required to address unique and demanding challenges. Unfortunately many programs for students with E/BD emphasize control and exclusion rather than effective prevention and intervention (Jones et al., 2004). In a study of policies and programs designed for troubled students, Knitzer et al., (1990) found that
the curriculum in most classes for students with E/BD emphasized applied behavioral systems within a curriculum of control. The researchers found that some teachers were more focused on maintaining order and moving students along the level system, rather than capitalizing on provision of individualized, meaningful, and stimulating lessons.

Lack of skills on the part of educators often creates situations in which teachers and administrators are reluctant to work with students with E/BD (Billingsley, 2004a). Osher et al., (2004) theorizes that the disruptive and inappropriate behaviors demonstrated by students with E/BD occur due to absence of effective academic instruction. The absence of effective academic instruction within classrooms for students with E/BD is particularly disconcerting and has been blamed for poor outcomes among students with E/BD. The limited attention given to academic needs of students with E/BD is responsible in part to the extremely poor outcomes including high rates of absenteeism, low grade point averages, and unacceptable levels of school drop-out (NLTS-2, 2003). In addition, the dismal teaching practices coupled with unrealistic expectations that teachers place on their students provides little opportunity for students to make academic progress and often leads to increased levels of stress (Wehby et al., 2003).

Work Environment

Teachers of students with E/BD are typically required to assume varied responsibilities within their school settings ranging from being a self-contained classroom teacher to a consultant teacher working with the regular classroom teacher. Conflicting responsibilities within these multiple positions have the potential of generating role conflicts (Essex, 1998). Excessive and competing responsibilities make
it difficult to function effectively, often resulting in role problems. Role conflict is the major contributor to job-related stress, low levels of commitment, less job satisfaction, and greater intent to leave the profession (Billingsley, 2004b; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Specific district and school variables that affect attrition/retention of teachers include administrative support, collegiality, parent support, and teacher autonomy in decision-making (Kaff, 2004). The absence of favorable workplace conditions due to excessive bureaucratic requirements often leaves teachers with little time to provide for the instructional needs of their students resulting into negative outcomes. Unsupportive work environments together with poor role expectations may lead to stress, burnout, and eventually attrition among special educators (Billingsley, 1993; 2004b).

Communicating role-related problems to supervisors and colleagues may help teachers find solutions to their problems. School principals have the primary task of collaborating with teachers to clarify roles and responsibilities in an effort to reduce stress (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Teachers who feel supported are most likely to grow in skill development and commitment to their jobs. The students are also likely to feel the impact in their interactions with the teacher (Essex, 1998). However, in order to address these problems, a thorough understanding of the impact of role conflicts on teacher commitment to their jobs and career decisions is necessary.

Many teachers report that their jobs have been made harder due to issues associated with poor attendance, unwillingness by some students to do homework, and poor turnout at parent-teacher conferences (Hill & Barth, 2004). Kaff (2004) studied 658 special education teachers, including 159 teachers of students with E/BD, to determine
why special education teachers leave the field. Results showed that the most important
determinant of intent to stay in teaching for all special educators was the workplace
conditions. Job satisfaction had a strong positive impact on teachers’ intent to stay,
whereas, role-related problems played a major role in decisions to leave.

Special education teacher roles vary from school to school and in some cases
they vary from student to student (Blanton et al., 2006). Wasburn-Moses (2006) argues
that before special education teachers can be blamed for poor student outcomes, it is
important to consider the realities of their teaching assignments. Wasburn-Moses found
that special educators’ are expected to teach academic skills as well as provide
vocational and life skills necessary for achieving quality life after school. McKenzie
(1995) reported that special education teachers were assigned to teach a variety of
content classes, an issue that further precipitates the poor quality of academic
instruction provided to students with E/BD.

Sutherland, Denny & Gunter (2005) examined the reported professional
development needs of teachers of students with E/BD. Results indicate that teachers
felt most comfortable collaborating with others to provide educational services for
students with E/BD. In addition, teachers indicated that they felt least comfortable
regarding their ability to effectively plan for academic instruction. Hence, it is crucial that
schools reconsider the level of preparedness of teachers before assigning them to
teach students with E/BD.

National efforts to improve educational experiences and performance of students
with E/BD are driven by provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and
Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004). The adequate
yearly progress (AYP) mandate challenges teachers to pay closer attention to academic achievement for all students, which presents an added challenge to special education teachers who are expected to help students lacking basic academic skills learn the more complex curriculum (Pugach & Warger, 2001). In an attempt to plan appropriate programs for adolescents with E/BD, teachers often find themselves torn between the requirements of a mandated curriculum and the needs of the student (Johns et al., 1996).

Efforts to improve student’s educational experiences are driven by federal initiatives that require students with disabilities to have equal access to the general education curriculum participate in the high stakes testing and meet the AYP. These initiatives have led to the push for more students with disabilities to be included in general education classrooms and yet students with E/BD were among the least desirable of all disability categories since many teachers feel unprepared to work with them (Wagner et al., 2006).

The issue of accountability has been heavily criticized by some teachers of students with E/BD, citing one sidedness of the NCLB accountability mandates and their failure to hold students and their parents to the same standards as the teachers (Lane et al., 2005). Educational reforms laws, school improvement plans, and accountability efforts lose meaning when attrition annually removes many of the brightest and most energetic new teachers (Minarik, Thornton & Perreault, 2003). It is unfortunate that framers of federal and state compliance requirements failed to foresee their impact on teacher attrition and retention given the increased role stress on teachers.
Attrition and Retention

School districts nationwide continuously struggle to fill special education teaching positions with qualified teachers. Beginning special educators face a variety of challenges (e.g., overwhelming paperwork, myriad of legal and accountability issues, widely differing student abilities, ill equipped classrooms, limited materials and supplies) during their first few years of teaching (Whitaker, 2001). Attrition of special education teachers has been associated with workplace conditions, teacher characteristics, growing enrollment of students with disabilities and retirement. In addition some beginning special education teachers do not possess the basic knowledge and skills to overcome the challenges associated with the job which made them vulnerable to attrition (Brownell, Sindelar, Bishop, Langley & Seo, 2002).

Attrition studies have paid minimal attention to the relationship between teacher qualifications (e.g., teaching experience, degrees earned and certification status) and teacher career decisions (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener et al., 1997). The highly qualified teacher mandate of NCLB makes provisions for individuals with a bachelor’s degree in core subjects to enter classrooms without going through pedagogical training required for teacher certification (Hill & Barth, 2004). Studies examining the relationship between teachers’ certification route and attrition report higher levels of attrition among uncertified teachers than certified teachers (Billingsley, 2004b; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic & Maislin, 1999). Opponents of alternative certification argue that these programs allow individuals with little or no preparation to become teachers (Tyler et al., 2002).
Teacher Attrition

High attrition rates have been attributed to low salaries, inadequate support from school administrators and limited input in decision making (Billingsley, 2004b; Ingersoll, 2001). Other variables such as personal issues (e.g., retirement, parents choosing to stay home with their children), work-related variables (e.g., salary, school climate, lack of administrative support, issues related to role) (Billingsley, 2004b; Boe, Bobbitt & Cook, 1997; Boe, Bobbit, Cook, Whitener et al., 1997; Brownell et al., 1995; George et al., 1995; Kaff, 2004), teacher characteristics (e.g., age, experience, race, academic ability, teacher preparation; Singh & Billingsley, 1996) and behavioral characteristics of students have also been associated with attrition of special education teachers.

George et al., (1995) examined the career intentions of teachers of students with E/BD to determine conditions that lead to teacher dissatisfaction, low commitment and the ultimate decisions to leave their jobs. The researchers found that variables related to the organizational structure of the school setting (e.g., type of service delivery, adequacy of support, availability of time for developing curricula and completing paperwork) were the key variables that distinguished stayers from leavers. Consequently, Billingsley (2004b) discussed different types of attrition (e.g., leaving the teaching profession, transferring to other teaching and educational positions) and argued that efforts to reduce attrition should be based on an understanding of the factors that contribute to special educators’ decisions to leave their job. In addition, Boe et al., (1999) reported that special education teachers on provisional or emergency certificates were at greater risk for leaving their jobs compared to the more experienced and fully certified teachers.
Boe, Bobbitt & Cook, (1997) examined various aspects of teacher turnover among general and special education teachers. Results indicate a higher turnover for special education teachers than general educators in terms of attrition and transfers within the profession. The authors noted that some factors for teacher turnover may be desirable (e.g., moving to leadership position, new school), whereas, others such as retirement are inevitable. Efforts to address teacher attrition should focus on work environment factors such as positive school climate, adequate support systems particularly principal and central office supports, opportunities for professional development, reasonable role demands and higher salaries were associated with teacher retention (Billingsley, 2004b, Brownell et al., 1995; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; George et al., 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Boe, Cook, Kauffman & Danielson (1996) distinguished between quantity shortages versus quality shortage noting that quality shortage exists when schools cannot fill the special education teacher positions with professionals possessing the right qualifications. Olivarez & Arnold (2006) reported that attrition rates of special education teachers were higher than teachers in all other disciplines and often schools resorted to filling positions in the E/BD category with uncertified teachers. Ingersoll (2001) found that special education personnel shortages vary greatly by geographic locations within states and by disability category. In addition, the author noted that high poverty schools faced the challenge of finding qualified teachers to fill their vacant positions and often experienced higher teacher turnover rates compared to wealthier school districts. Hence, it is important to consider not only supply and demand, but also the quality of teachers filling the vacant positions.
Teacher Retention

Availability of high quality teacher preparation programs within a geographic area increases the availability of trained teachers within a local area. As schools nationwide continue to battle teacher shortages, administrators from state departments, educational agencies and school districts have implemented a variety of strategies to resolve the problem. McLeskey et al., (2004) reviewed research regarding the chronic shortage of special education teacher examining the magnitude in the supply and demand. Findings indicate that teacher retention efforts in many states include amendments to teacher certification programs, approval of teacher education programs and the make-up of teacher case loads. Some states and local education agencies have incorporated strategies such as hiring bonuses, stipends or loan forgiveness for teachers in critical need areas, luring retired teachers back into the classroom, and developing alternative programs to help districts prepare their own teachers (Hirsch, Koppich & Knapp, 2001). In addition, some local education agencies offer higher beginning teacher salaries compared to state standards, pay for moving expenses for teachers certified in a critical needs area, teacher induction and mentoring programs (McLeskey et al., 2004).

School districts must develop and implement comprehensive plans to ensure retention of quality teachers. Strategies for improved teacher retention include effective principal leadership, employment of qualified teachers, enhanced relationships within the educational community, and promotion of connectedness with the larger community (Minarik et al., 2003). School principals should support special education teachers by facilitating positive school climate, fostering collegiality, and ensuring that teachers have the supports needed for their work (e.g., well trained mentors, good job matches,
reasonable caseloads; Billingsley, 2004b). Working conditions that allow teachers to meet their professional goals and gain recognition from colleagues, supervisors, and parents will enhance teachers’ feelings of efficacy as well as their commitment to teaching (Cross & Billingsley, 1994). Qualified teachers working in desirable work environments will have greater opportunities to experience work rewards (e.g., professional fulfillment, recognition, salary) which will ultimately lead to increased levels of commitment and decisions to stay in teaching (Billingsley, 1993).

Kaff (2004) explored conditions that encourage teachers to stay in their jobs by examining changes in job roles and responsibilities that would increase teacher retention. Respondents indicated that increased amounts of administrative support, improved quality of services coupled with appropriate placements for students, and restructuring elements of the school day to help educators adequately meet the needs of students were crucial factors that would encourage them to stay. In addition, respondents felt that it was essential that general education teachers share responsibility for helping students with disabilities access the general education curriculum. Many special educators felt that administrators and general educators failed to realize the multitude of role and responsibilities special educators had to bear. They recommended that it was imperative that administrators and general education teachers should increase their knowledge about special education.

*Teacher Characteristics*

Successful programs for students with disabilities depend on contributions, effort, involvement, and commitment from teachers who possess specialized skills to work effectively with students who exhibit academic and behavioral deficits (George et al.,
Studies on teacher attrition and retention have examined the extent to which teacher characteristics (e.g., age, gender, educational preparation, certifications held, years of experience) influence teacher commitment and career decisions. In a thematic review of literature on special education teacher attrition, Billingsley (2004b) found differences in the function of age among teachers who transferred to other positions compared to those left their jobs.

Singer (1992) reported that age, gender, years of experience, academic achievement, nature of certification and salary were some the main factors that determined the likelihood that a teacher will leave their job. The author argued that largest group at-risk for attrition was female special educators below the age of 35 who have taught for less than 5 years. They were two times more likely to leave their jobs than mature teachers. The at-risk group of teachers left for a variety of reasons both external and internal. Consequently, experienced teachers were faced with issues such as loss of tenure, salary, and investment in specific location which in most cases influenced their decisions to stay (Billingsley, 2004b).

Billingsley (1993) examined employment and personal factors responsible for retention and attrition of general and special education teachers. The author noted that factors influencing teachers’ career decisions evolved over time. These factors often reflected changes in interest, needs and priorities during the different phases of the teacher’s life. Teacher qualifications and work conditions were found to play a significant role in personal satisfaction and subsequently commitment to their jobs. In addition, Singh & Billingsley (1996) noted that previous work in non-educational environments may exert an influence over teachers’ effectiveness for their current
teaching job and future career decisions.

Teacher Preparation

The preparation of qualified special education personnel continues to be a challenging task due to the changing demographics within the schools, increasing number of school reform efforts, changes in educational philosophy, and the structures of special education (Bullock, Ellis & Wilson, 1998). Bullock & Gable (2006) associated the shortage of qualified special education teachers to the shortage of faculty at the college level possessing the skills to provide adequate training to the pre-service teachers. These problems are further exacerbated by the shortage of cultural and linguistically diverse teachers and lack of qualified candidates to fill existing or forecasted vacancies in higher education (Bullock, 2004).

Teachers of students with E/BD require training in specialized instructional techniques and extended opportunities for integrated hands-on experience within authentic classroom settings (Cook, Landrum, Tankersley & Kauffman, 2003). Zionts, Shellady & Zionts (2006) reported that teaching interns were often unable to connect the theoretical concepts learned during pre-service training to the real world in which they will teach. The authors noted that many teachers felt that pre-service preparation programs did not equip them with the skills to address the diverse student academic needs nor skills to balance demands due to poor work conditions.

Guetzloe & Johns (2004) recommended that teachers of students with E/BD should use a variety of instructional methods (e.g., direct instruction, lectures, videos, recordings, direct experiences) and behavioral change techniques (e.g., cognitive strategies, behavioral modification, counseling) to address the diverse student’s needs.
The authors argue that effective academic instruction for students with E/BD requires ongoing assessments of students’ interests and abilities. In addition academic instruction needs to address multiple intelligences, diverse learning styles and also provide opportunities for real life applications to ensure relevance for each student (Abrams, 2005).

Pre-service preparation programs for special educators’ working with students with E/BD provide limited information on research-based instructional techniques that are effective in working with students with E/BD. Preparation programs should incorporate child-focused strategies designed to address behavioral needs of the students with E/BD. In addition, teachers of students with E/BD should be equipped with skills to effectively implement secondary (e.g., social skills training) and tertiary (e.g., functional assessment of behavior) intervention strategies (Cook et al., 2003). Gagnon, Wheby, Strong & Falk (2006) argue that absence of systematic behavioral and instructional programming for students with E/BD presents serious implications for the academic achievement. Hence, if schools are going to accommodate the full range of diverse needs presented by students with E/BD, teacher preparation programs must change their practices.

Teacher Certification

An extreme shortage of qualified special education teachers continues to push schools to hire uncertified, out-of-field and less qualified teachers. The large scale hiring of unlicensed special education teachers raises the question of the effectiveness since most holders of emergency temporary licensure are typically hired with little or no formal special education knowledge, with the understanding that they will complete full
licensure within 3 years. Such procedures have enabled schools to fill the gaps and continue delivering special education services (Nougaret, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2005). One of the best predictors of teacher shortage lies in the number of new emergency licenses issued to teachers who are not fully certified, representing the shortfall of teachers after all sources have been tapped (Lauritzen & Friedman, 1991). However, to-date there is limited research addressing the issue of teacher quality and the role it plays on teacher commitment and ultimately on their career decisions.

The need for high quality teachers in special education, have led to the emergence of a variety of alternative routes to certification (Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum, 2005). Many school districts have responded to the need for qualified teachers by implementing emergency licensure or hiring alternative certified teachers to fill the gaps and continue providing special education services (Hill & Barth, 2004; Nougaret et al., 2005). Prolific increases in alternative certification programs have been partly attributed to the NCLB requirement that all teachers should be highly qualified (Blanton et al., 2006; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 1998). NCLB encourages different approaches to teacher preparation by requiring alternative route candidates to pass certification or licensure exams to be highly qualified. In addition, alternative route programs may opt to entirely waive coursework in educational philosophy, pedagogy and teaching practice (Rosenberg, Boyer, Sindelar, & Misra, 2007).

Approved alternative certification programs should uphold standards by incorporating rigorous teacher education activities given the multiple paths to certification (Rosenberg et al., 2007). Many teacher candidates have been lured to obtain teaching credentials via fast track teacher preparation programs in an effort to
obtain the special education teaching positions that are often readily available. Unfortunately these programs have failed to produce teachers who possess prerequisite skills necessary to provide quality instruction to students with E/BD (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 1998). Critics argue that students who need quality teachers the most are the students with the highest rate of uncertified and less qualified teachers.

Concerns regarding the viability of these programs have been raised with many fearing that individuals are avoiding programs that are comprehensive in nature to pursue programs with limited requirements. Available evidence suggests that the components of these programs vary widely in terms of scope, depth, and duration which inevitably influence the quality of teachers produced and their level of preparedness for the challenge of working with students with E/BD (Burke & Paternite, 2007). However, alternative program advocates assert that there is limited evidence linking pedagogical training and teacher quality and argue that teacher effectiveness would most likely be associated with content knowledge and verbal abilities (Hess, Rotherham, & Walsh, 2004).

McLesky et al., (2004) reported that there have been cases where teachers were classified as uncertified because they do not hold certification in their teaching assignment. The authors also found that some states classified long-term substitute teachers who do not hold college degrees as uncertified. The result is that in both cases, the teachers are classified as un-certified and yet both bring vastly different qualifications to the teaching position. Polsgrove (2003) noted that many states do not require specific training in the area of E/BD. Katsiyannis, Landrum, Bullock, & Vinton (1997) found that only half of the states have teacher certification in E/BD and even in
these states a mild-to-moderate categorical certificate would allow teachers without specialized training to provide services to students with E/BD. The authors noted that several states appear to be moving towards the non-categorical special education certification away from specialized certification in E/BD. Hence, we can see the lack of uniformity in professional standards among university programs and state certification requirements for teachers of students with E/BD.

The reality is that while the need for new teachers may be met through a variety of teacher preparation routes, the NCLB highly qualified teacher mandate may not be met (Mooney, Denny, & Gunter, 2004). Kaff (2004) recommends restructuring teacher preparation by implementing a multi-tiered training system for special educators. This means that training would include core knowledge in disability areas, individualizing curriculum, instructional strategies for students with disabilities, assessment, and time management. Such preparation would equip special educators for roles in inclusive and resource service delivery settings. Brownell et al., (2005) recommended that preparation programs for special educators should include extensive field experience, collaboration, evaluation of impact of teacher education programs, and focus on inclusion and cultural diversity. The authors suggest that carefully designed field experiences that allow prospective teachers to integrate information they are acquiring in coursework may enable better knowledge and skill development in beginning teachers.

Darling-Hammond (2001) argues that extensive field experience would avail the opportunity for pre-service teachers to be linked with cooperating teachers and would provide opportunities for integration of pedagogy and content knowledge. The author
recommends that only cooperating teachers who possess the skills to mentor teacher interns by modeling appropriate attitudes and best practices associated with effective academic instruction and behavior management should be selected. Unfortunately, in many cases cooperating teachers were chosen because they volunteered and the problems are further compounded when teacher preparation programs fail to provide cooperating teachers with clear direction regarding expectations for the field experience.

**Teacher Quality**

In this era of educational accountability, entry level special educators are required to increase academic performance and school outcomes for their students, a challenge that requires a myriad of skills and competencies. Concerns regarding teacher quality relate to the fact that many teachers demonstrate competence by passing a standardized test and, yet, may not necessarily possess sufficient competence to address the needs of students with E/BD. Teacher quality has been defined in a variety of ways range from a focus on the knowledge possessed to the actions and creativity exhibited by the teacher (Billingsley, 1993; Boe & Cook, 2006). Arguments surrounding what constitute a highly qualified teacher address the need for teachers with content knowledge in academic subjects and skills to help diverse learners make progress in their academic goals (Sutherland et al., 2005). In addition, their ability to provide accommodations for learning and behavioral support should also be addressed (Rosenberg et al., 2007).

Placing novice teachers with limited training in a classroom for students with E/BD continues to be a high risk endeavor given the diverse knowledge and skill required to address the needs of these students (Rosenberg et al., 2007). In addition to
competence in pedagogical and content knowledge, CEC (2003) recommends that entry level teachers of students with disabilities should be competent in assessing learning differences, instructional planning, implementing research based instructional strategies, professional and ethical practices and collaboration with families and other service providers. Consequently teachers of students with E/BD must possess skills to provide appropriate instructional strategies and behavioral management that meet the individual needs of these students. Appropriate educational programming for students with E/BD cannot occur without teachers who understand all aspects of the disability (Bullock & Gable, 2006).

While general education teacher preparation programs focus on the ability to teach academic content, most special education personnel preparation programs emphasize the disability deficit paradigm (Hardman & Mulder, 2004). Increasing student diversity and the highly qualified teacher mandate of NCLB requiring students with disabilities to be taught core content by highly qualified teachers makes a strong case for improving teacher preparation (Darling Hammond, 2001). Special education teachers must have adequate training to ensure that they can develop programs that adequately address the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

Any measure of teacher quality must account for the knowledge that teachers need to teach students with dramatically different needs, provide instruction in different content areas and engage in different interaction roles with students, administrators, and parents (Brownell et al., 2005). Preparing teachers to work collaboratively during this era of standard-driven systems requires great emphasis on academic support, management of challenging behavior, and teaching functional skills. In addition to
traditional skills, special education teacher preparation programs should focus on skills such as increased content knowledge, inclusive practices, collaboration, and leadership skills (Kaff, 2004).

Given the tremendous pressure on teachers to create effective instructional environments for all students, it is imperative that both special and general educators put systems in place to provide effective instruction (Wehby et al., 2003). Academic instruction must be differentiated to address the unique strengths, interests and needs of this diverse student population (Lane, Pierson, & Givner, 2004). While special education teachers should have skills and knowledge relevant to the needs of students with disabilities, they may also be called upon to apply this expertise to a much broader group of high-risk students in a collaborative educational environment (Hardman & Mulder, 2004).

According to Gunter, Coutinho, & Cade (2002), teachers who employ empirically validated practices will see marked academic gains in their students as well as a decrease in undesirable behaviors. Increasing academic scores for students with E/BD is a challenge that requires competence in implementing effective instructional strategies for learners with multiple academic deficits and expertise in diagnosing and assessing learning problems. Effective behavior management, collaboration, consultation, and advocacy skills are essential (Rosenberg et al., 2007), however, teachers who continuously struggled with discipline issues, unmotivated students and learning problems may over time perceive themselves as ineffective (Billingsley, 1993). These challenges may eventually lead to low self esteem, dissatisfaction, and attrition from teaching.
General educators express frustration over the requirements and demands associated with serving students with E/BD. These teachers are expected to increase academic performance of students with E/BD despite competing responsibilities, work problems, and inadequate supports (Jones et al., 2004). Wehby, Symons, Canale, & Go (1998) noted that many teachers of students with E/BD focus on controlling behavior rather than providing effective instruction. Gunter & Shores (1994) reported that some teachers made learning tasks difficult and frustrating which often result in aversive interactions between teachers and students that often distract the learning process. Hence, Billingsley (1993) recommends that teachers should confront their feelings of professional inadequacy or lack of fulfillment rather than ascribe their frustrations to work problems.

Teacher Commitment

A growing body of evidence indicates relatively high levels of discontent accompanied by low levels of commitment among teachers of students with E/BD (George et al., 1995). Mowdy, Porter, and Steers (1982) distinguish between attitudinal and behavioral commitment. The authors propose that attitudinal commitment to an organization should include the willingness to work hard, a strong desire to remain working for the organization, and acceptance of and belief in the goals and values of the organization. In contrast, behavioral commitment is a function of costs and rewards associated with working for an organization. Although the outcomes of commitment seem fairly clear, less is known regarding specific antecedents that promote commitment to an organization.

Brownell et al., (1995) examined variables influencing career decisions by special
education teachers. Their findings indicate that teacher characteristics and workplace conditions played a major role in influencing decisions by teachers to stay or leave their jobs. The authors argued that teachers who stayed were more committed to teaching students with disabilities, often willing to adjust their expectations and teaching styles to address the challenges associated with their job, and felt more prepared by their pre-service teacher preparation. In contrast, teachers who left often felt unprepared and struggled with fulfilling the requirements for their job.

Predictors of low levels of commitment

Research on teacher attrition have cited multiple interacting work-related problems as contributors to prolonged experiences of stress which eventually results in situations of burnout and attrition. Teacher attritions have been attributed to various problems including lack of time for curriculum development and paperwork, lack of support from parents, peers, administrators, and community agencies (Abrams, 2005; Billingsley and Cross, 1992; George et al., 1995), problems with management of student behaviors, diversity in needs, large caseloads (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; George et al., 1995), increased emphasis on standardized testing (Abrams, 2005), and workplace conditions (Billingsley, 2004b; Billingsley & Cross, 1991).

Billingsley (1993) hypothesized that when professional qualifications and work conditions are not favorable, teachers were more likely to experience fewer rewards which results in reduced commitment to their jobs. Educators believe that it is not possible to provide quality programs with limited resources due to inadequate funding, and inadequate staffing patterns (Kaff, 2004; Wasburn-Moses, 2006). Poor outcomes among students with E/BD have been blamed on the lack of basic components (Wehby
et al., 2003) and complexities within the different service delivery systems such as excessive paperwork, inadequate curriculum and instruction, fragmented service delivery, and limited options for students (Kaff, 2004). In addition, the unique role as teacher of students with E/BD or lack of others within the same campus doing a similar job may lead to role-isolation (Billingsley, 2004a). Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler (2005) reported that the challenges of first year special education teachers might be exacerbated by feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Conflicting responsibilities held by teachers of students with E/BD also have the potential of generating role conflicts which include role ambiguity, role dissonance, and role overload (Billingsley, 2004a). Role ambiguity occurs in situations where information describing expectations and requirements for a position is unavailable resulting in confusion about the teacher’s role (Billingsley, 2004b). Poor job design will, in most cases, inhibit the level of efficiency and effectiveness with which assigned tasks and responsibilities are completed which often results into frustration and work-related stress (Gersten et al., 2001). Role-dissonance occurs when expectations of the program differ from the teachers’ own expectations (e.g., when teachers are unable to use expertise or when decisions made that go against what teachers know to be effective practice). Consequently, role-overload occurs in cases where the special educators’ workload is unreasonable and their instructional time is limited due to many other responsibilities to which they have to attend (Billingsley, 2004a).

Kaff (2004) investigated factors responsible for special education teacher attrition. Nearly half the teachers in this study indicated that they planned to leave the field in the next five years. The findings indicate that role related problems and lack of
administrative and collegial support were the key main factors responsible for decisions by teachers to leave their jobs. Specific concerns expressed by teachers who considered leaving their jobs include lack of support from administration, general education colleagues and parents, excessive roles and responsibilities, in addition to teaching students with diverse needs, high case loads and the complexity of problems that accompany some of their students.

Wasburn-Moses (2006) examined program effectiveness in secondary special education programs by investigating the different roles special education teachers play in the implementation of four major components of special education programs namely basic skills instruction, content area instruction, vocational and pre-vocational skills instruction and transition planning. Results indicate that lack of program coherence and limited options for students presented major difficulties for the teachers in their efforts to develop effective programs for students with disabilities.

Mowdy et al., (1982) reported that ambiguous job assignments provide excessive stress often placing employees at conflict which leads to lowered commitment. Excessive and prolonged role problems may precipitate increased levels of stress, burnout, low levels of commitment, and increased intent by special education teachers to leave their jobs (George et al., 1995; Kaff, 2004). In addition, special educators experience fewer intrinsic rewards than other teachers due to slow student progress. Without the perception of success, teachers may become dissatisfied with their work and choose to leave teaching or transfer to work with less demanding populations (Billingsley, 1993).
Predictors of high levels of commitment

Commitment is a likely antecedent of retention in the workplace and efforts to promote retention should focus on identifying factors that influence teacher commitment to their jobs (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Miller, Brownell & Smith (1999) reported that environmental and workplace variables were powerful predictors of teacher career decisions. Many teachers indicated that the most important determinant for their intent to stay in special education teaching was the workplace conditions (Kaff, 2004).

Billingsley & Cross (1992) noted that teachers who experience higher levels of principal support are likely to be more committed to their employing school divisions and more satisfied with their jobs. Creation of supportive relationships between teachers and principals and clarification of roles and provision of professional support may help teachers derive more satisfaction from their work (Billingsley, 2004b). In addition, teachers of students with E/BD should work within the scope of a clearly defined job description that specifies roles and responsibilities of the teacher and other support personnel (Kaff, 2004).

Singh and Billingsley (1996) noted that job satisfaction had a strong positive impact on teacher’s intent to stay. Work environment factors associated with teacher commitment and intent to stay include higher salaries, opportunities for professional development, and reasonable role demands (Billingsley, 2004b). In addition, favorable professional qualifications accompanied by positive work environments would present greater rewards to teachers, leading to increased commitment (Billingsley, 2004a). Other factors influencing teacher career decisions include teachers’ past experiences (e.g., educational preparation, prior work experiences), work conditions (e.g., district
policies, school environments, nature of teachers individual work assignment) and present knowledge and skills that contribute to teacher preparedness for the challenges associated with their positions (Billingsley, 1993).

Efforts by principals to reduce stress and role-related problems will boost teachers’ commitment and intent to stay. Singh & Billingsley (1996) reported that administrators, who collaborated with their teaching staff, solicited ongoing suggestions and feedback, and assisted teachers with their problems and concerns were more likely to have teachers who are less stressed, more satisfied and more committed. The authors recommend that teachers should have some specific time set aside daily where they can discuss and debrief critical situations that occurred during the school day. Consequently, researchers (e.g., Jones et al., 2004; Kaff, 2004) recommend scheduling a common planning time where both special and general education teachers can collaborate and plan together. The authors argue that administrators should provide compensation to teachers for their participation in after-school meetings and any extra duties that extend beyond the school day. Professional discretion within the work environments will help bolster teachers’ motivation and commitment to their jobs and in turn will influence their career decisions (Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Conclusion

Appropriate educational programming for students with E/BD cannot take place without teachers who possess skills to develop and implement effective programs. A reasonable degree of staff stability is necessary for school improvement efforts to ensure that all students meet the AYP. Efforts to solve the personnel shortage will require a closer examination of the specific variables that promote teacher commitment
and satisfaction with their jobs. Schools should develop effective teacher retention practices in an effort to address teacher shortages in special education (McLesky et al., 2004). Identification of training needs should be a requisite step in the development and delivery of effective pre-service and professional development programs (Sutherland et al., 2005). Research is needed to provide deeper understanding regarding on how teachers of students with E/BD perceive their level of preparedness and its impact on career decisions. In addition, educators should receive ongoing practical and research-based training to equip them with the skills to develop appropriate programs and supports for students with E/BD (Jones et al., 2004).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The study examined factors responsible for teacher turnover in programs for students with E/BD. This chapter delineates (a) the purpose of the study, (b) research questions that guided the study, (c) description of research participants, (d) data collection procedures, and (e) data analysis procedures.

Purpose of the Study

Given the current status of teacher supply and demand, teacher retention efforts should be integral to addressing the problem. Research studies requiring feedback from educators who currently work or have left working with students with E/BD can help identify areas that need to be addressed in order for retention efforts to be successful (Otto & Arnold, 2005). This study investigated personal characteristics and work factors that compel teachers of students with E/BD to quit or stay in their job. Teacher perception of their level of preparedness with regards to teaching students with E/BD and its role in career decisions were also examined.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer three research questions:

1. What causes teachers of students with E/BD to leave their positions?
2. What role does teacher qualification and perceived level of preparedness play in career decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD?
3. What are the pre-service and in-service training needs for teachers of students with E/BD?
Research Participants

Participants were comprised of a nationwide sample of educators working with students with E/BD who had participated in one or more of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) professional development events. A stratified random sample of teachers from each the four census regions of the United States were selected from the CCBD mailing list (See Appendix A). A sample of 600 teachers was selected to participate in the study. Five individuals out of the intended audience were asked to pilot test the survey questionnaire for readability and clarity of questions. Invitation letters were mailed to the selected sample explaining the study and to solicit their assistance (See Appendix B). Participants were invited to log-on to a website using randomly assigned codes to complete an electronic survey (see Appendix C).

Two focus group meetings comprised of teachers who work with students classified as E/BD from school districts within the North Texas area were held. Krueger (1988) recommends that the composition of subjects participating in a focus group should be characterized by homogeneity, but with sufficient variation among them to allow for contrasting opinions. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure that respondents selected were teachers who work or have worked with students with E/BD and were experienced in issues concerning teaching students with E/BD. According to Patton (2001), the goal of purposeful sampling is to select participants possessing some breath of experience, share commonalities and is likely to provide useful information that would address the purpose of the study.

It was necessary during the selection process to ensure that respondents invited to participate in the focus group meetings were unfamiliar with one another. A total of 20
participants were invited to participate in the focus group, however, only 15 teachers responded indicating their willingness to participate in the focus groups. Informed consent letters (see Appendix B) and instructions telling participants of the confirmed times and locations for each the two focus group meetings were emailed to the 15 participants. Participants were asked to select time and date when they would be available to participate in the focus group meeting. Nine individuals confirmed their willingness to participate in the first meeting and the other 6 committed to attend the second meeting. Two focus group meetings were held on May 23, 2007 and May 31, 2007 with 5 and 4 participants respectively in attendance.

Data Collection Procedures

The study used quantitative (online survey) and qualitative (focus group) methods of data collection to help determine the validity of significant variables generated in survey research. An online survey was administered to a nationwide sample of teachers of students with E/BD. Mailing lists for educators were obtained from the chairperson of CCBD professional development. Due to the large size of the sample and vastness of area covered by this study, an online survey was the most appropriate means to facilitate collection of data.

The survey used closed-ended questions and investigated factors that caused teachers of students with E/BD to stay in or leave their jobs and their perceptions on their level of preparedness with regards to implementation of program components and performing specific skills associated with planning and delivery of academic instruction. The questioning route for the online survey explored demographic information, educational preparation, teaching experiences and the challenges faced by teachers
working with students with E/BD. In addition, the role played by teacher qualifications and perceived levels of preparedness on career decisions were also examined. Respondents were also asked to identify pre-service and in-service needs they perceived as important in their effort to educate students with E/BD.

Two focus groups lasting approximately one hour in length were conducted as a follow-up to the survey. Focus groups provide opportunities to clarify and expand on issues from the survey (Krueger, 1988). A predetermined questioning route was used to help clarify insights and to provide a local perspective of the teachers. The interview used open-ended questions to provide respondents with ample opportunity to share their experiences and diverse perspectives. The importance of holding focus group sessions in addition to the nationwide survey was to help clarify and give voice to important teacher perspectives.

The questioning route examined teacher perceptions with regards to conflicts faced in working with students with E/BD and perceived level of preparedness for their job and the role played by both factors on teacher commitment and future career plans (see Appendix D). The focus groups were held at the Denton Public Library, South Branch. This location was selected due to its central location and convenience to majority of the respondents. The sessions were recorded using an audio voice recorder and later transcribed for data analysis (See Appendix E). I served as the moderator and an assistant moderator was recruited to take field notes, operate the recording device, handle refreshments, and respond to any unexpected issues that arose during the focus group meeting. Participants were reinforced with edibles, prior to and immediately after the focus group session.
Data Analysis Procedures

Responses from the survey items were analyzed using frequency distributions and analysis of variance (ANOVA) both performed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software. Frequency distributions were used to organize and summarize demographic information, work environmental factors, and teacher preparation data. In addition, Eta squared ($\eta^2$) was calculated to determine if there was a significant amount of variance in the way teachers perceived their ability to perform selected program components (implementation of program components, ability to perform skills, teaching content) that could be explained by the grouping variable, career decisions. Eta squared ($\eta^2$) provides a more accurate index of the relationship between two variables than other correlational statistics when the relationship is markedly nonlinear. $\eta^2$ was calculated by dividing sum of squares between (SSB) by sum of squares total (SST). The results are presented in tables together with the frequency distributions.

Analysis of the focus group data involved transcribing information from the audiotapes, summarizing responses from the transcripts and field notes, and sorting responses into categories. Krueger (1988) recommends holding a post meeting discussion within hours after the focus group session to compare notes. At the conclusion of the focus group meetings, I held post meeting discussions with my assistant for the purpose of debriefing. The intent of the debriefing session was to ensure that the field notes captured all the key information. Materials needed for the focus group analysis include a copy of the questioning route, copies of all transcripts and a copy of the assistant moderator’s field notes.
Participants were protected using pseudo-names and any information that could identify them was omitted from the transcripts. All tapes were destroyed at the completion of the study. During the analysis of focus group data, consideration was given to five factors (a) words and phrases, (b) context within which comments were made, (c) internal consistency of positions held by participants’ during the session (d) specificity of responses and the amount of detail provided (e) identification of the big ideas (Krueger, 1988). The transcripts and field notes were reviewed to obtain meaning and to identify themes, after which the themes were assigned to different categories each related to the research questions. Attention was paid to themes that related to subjects with similar demographic characteristics. The outcomes were reported in the form of narrative descriptions in response to the research questions.

There are software programs available to aid researchers in analysis of qualitative data (e.g., The Ethnograph, NUD*ISD, Atlas/ti³). According to Krueger & Casey (2000), these specially developed programs may help researchers analyze large sets of text, however, the down side is the amount of time needed to learn and operate the program. In addition, the software programs may provide a level of analysis not necessarily required for a specific study. Given the magnitude of data collected from the focus group and the fact that focus group was not the main mode of data collection in this study, I elected not to use any software package.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to examine factors responsible for teacher turnover among teachers of students with E/BD. Survey invitations were sent to educators working with or have in the past worked with students with E/BD and were members of CCBD or had participated in one or more of the CCBD professional development events. A total of 156 educators responded to the online survey and 9 participated in the focus groups. Information generated from the survey was analyzed using frequency distributions and ANOVA. The focus group responses were analyzed by summarizing and sorting information into the different categories in response to the research questions. The results were presented in narrative and tabular form.

Invitations were sent to a random selection of 150 educators from each of the 4 geographic regions as defined by the United States Census Bureau (see Appendix A) soliciting their assistance in completing the online survey. Each participant in the sample was assigned a unique four digit log-in to provide access to the online survey. A total of 156 responded to the online survey. Representation of returned surveys within the different regions included 28 (18%) from the Western region, 78 (50%) from the Southern region, 17 (11%) from North Eastern region, and 33 (21%) from the Midwestern region. According to Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant (2003) online surveys may increase the likelihood of participation given that respondents may complete the survey at their own convenience, however, issues such as technical problems, difficulty in assuring anonymity and confidentiality may present challenges. The online survey presented a response rate of (N=156, 26%) and 5 respondents were unable to
participate in the survey due to problems with their browser. While the response rate for the online survey may appear low, Moss & Hendry (2002) reported varying response rates for online surveys ranging from a low of just 6% to a high of 76%. The authors argued that the low rates of return may not necessarily represent bias especially when respondent characteristics were perceived as representative of non respondents. In addition, estimating non-response may be a challenge given that available information does not necessarily reveal their unique features in terms of attitudes or how they may have responded to the survey (Sax et al., 2003).

Demographic Information

Part 1 of the survey requested respondents to provide demographic information including gender, state of residence, educational and instructional settings and the nature of their teaching assignments. Information on total years of teaching experience and number of years worked with students with E/BD were also collected. The responses were evaluated to provide background information on characteristics of the respondents who participated in this study. The sample comprised of 121 (77.6%) female and 35 (22.4%) male educators who currently work with or have worked with students with E/BD in the past. A total of 20 teachers from the North Texas area were invited to participate in the focus group meetings of which 15 confirmed their willingness to participate, however, only 9 teachers actually participated in the focus group meetings. The findings of this study are organized in tabular and narrative form in response to each research question.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of setting in which they worked. Three different settings (i.e., urban, suburban and rural) and several teaching
assignments were given as options within the survey. Results indicate that 41 (26.3%) of the respondents were from urban settings, 87 (55.8%) suburban and 28 (17.9%) were from rural settings. In addition, respondents were asked to select the item that best described their teaching assignment and those whose teaching assignment were not listed were asked to specify in the “other” box associated with the survey question. Results indicate that 37 (23.7%) of the respondents taught in elementary schools, 36 (23.1%) of respondents taught in middle school, 17 (10.9%) taught in settings where middle and high school were combined, 36 (23.1%) taught at the high school level and 30 (19.2%) taught in separate campus alternative schools.

**Instructional Settings**

Given that students with E/BD receive academic instruction in a variety of settings, five different settings were listed and respondents were asked to select the item that best described the instructional setting in which they work (See Table 1). Findings indicate that 4 (2.6%) taught in general education settings, 18 (11.5%) taught in inclusion settings or co-taught with a general education teacher, 29 (18.6%) of respondents taught in resource classroom settings, and 51 (32.7%) of the respondents taught in self-contained settings located on a regular campus. In addition, 27 (17.3%) taught in specialized programs (day or residential) that were located on a separate campus away from the students home school. Respondents whose instructional setting was not listed were asked to specify in the “other” box associated with the survey question. Twenty seven respondents (17.3%) selected “other.” Responses specified under “other” included program specialist (n=4), consulting teacher (n =11), interventionist (n =4), behavior specialist (n =6), assistant principal in charge of special
education students ($n=2$). All respondents who participated in the study met the criteria requiring that they currently work with or have worked in the past with students classified as E/BD.

Table 1

*Instructional Settings in Which Respondents Worked*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Setting</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion (including co-teaching)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Classroom</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Contained Classroom (on regular campus)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Contained Classroom (separate campus)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching Experience**

Research studies have listed teaching experience as one of the main factors that determines the likelihood that a teacher will stay in or leave a job. The largest group of educators at risk for attrition was identified as female special education teachers with less than 5 years of experience (Singer, 1992; Billingsley, 2004b). In this study, respondents were asked to indicate the total number of years they had worked in education and to specify how many of these years had been spent working with students with E/BD (See Table 2). Findings indicate that 82 (52.6%) of the respondents had been in education for 10 years or more. Thirty-five respondents (22.4%) reported
having 5 to 10 years experience, 32 (20.5%) reported having 1 to 5 years and only 7 (4.5%) of the sample was in their first year of teaching. In addition, 91 (58.3%) of the respondents indicated that they had worked with students with E/BD for 5 years or more, 21 (13.5%) had worked for 4 to 5 years, 33 (21.2%) had worked for 2 to 3 years and 11 (7.1%) were first year teachers.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience (Total)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 1 year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 5 years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 10 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience (E/BD)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 1 year</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 3 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 5 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Data

Teachers of students with E/BD leave their jobs at higher proportions than other special education teachers. Efforts to address the specific concerns responsible for
teacher turnover must ensure a greater understanding of factors responsible for career
decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD. Part II of the survey examined
factors within the work environment that were responsible for teacher turnover. The
outcomes are presented in response to the research questions.

Research Question # 1: What causes teachers of students with E/BD to leave their
positions?

Work Related Variables

High teacher turnover, especially in programs for students with E/BD, have been
attributed to a variety of workplace variables. The survey listed selected workplace
variables that cause teachers of students with E/BD to leave their jobs. The variables
were rated using a Likert scale to determine the most problematic variables responsible
for attrition of teachers of students with E/BD. Results are presented in Table 3.

Findings indicate that involvement in too many non-instructional tasks (n = 105, 67.3%)
and role overloads (n = 108, 69.2%) were the two most problematic variables
responsible for teacher attrition in programs serving students with E/BD. Respondents
indicated that external relationships with the community (n = 70, 44.9%) and feelings of
isolation (n = 51, 32.7%) were the least problematic of the work related variables.

In addition, focus group findings indicate that frequent disruptions as a result of
challenging behaviors exhibited by students with E/BD often leads to loss of
instructional time which can be very frustrating to the teacher and students whose
learning has been disrupted. This coupled with the idea of having students with a variety
of cognitive skill levels within the self-contained classroom makes it very difficult to plan
academic instruction. One respondent asserted that the core classes in self-contained
settings are very basic and often the goal is to get through the lesson without any melt
down, breakdown, flare-ups, or conflicts between the students. The participants were in
consensus that excessive work loads often result in situations where teachers spend
less time teaching and more of their time completing paperwork, writing IEP’s, Behavior
Intervention Plans (BIP’s) and progress reports.

Table 3

*Work Related Variables Responsible for Attrition of Teachers of Students with E/BD*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Variables</th>
<th>Most Problematic</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Least Problematic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community relationships</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant changes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate induction</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent decisions</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of placements</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Instructional Tasks</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Overload</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey asked respondents to specify work related variables that were not
listed on the survey in the “other” box associated with the survey question. Findings as
outlined by respondents include:
• Administrators using E/BD programs as dumping grounds for juvenile delinquents who do not necessarily qualify as students with E/BD \((n = 15)\)
• High teacher student ratios often leading to overcrowding \((n = 7)\)
• Lack of appropriate alternate placements for students who exhibit severe behavioral problems \((n = 5)\)
• Large case loads and overwhelming responsibilities \((n = 10)\)
• Lack of flexibility and communication issues between administration and staff \((n = 33)\)
• Lack of insights on disability and failure by general education teachers to acknowledge characteristics of E/BD and how it affects the students \((n = 12)\)
• Lack of meaningful consequences for student behavior and inconsistency with regards to expectations \((n = 20)\)
• Stress and burnout of working with students with mental health problems \((n = 10)\)

**Classroom Conditions**

The survey listed several classroom conditions that have been associated with dissatisfaction and lack of commitment among teachers of students with E/BD (See Table 4). The diverse nature of skills and ability levels exhibited by students with E/BD was reported to be the most problematic \((n = 106, 67.9\%)\). Additionally, lack of motivation among students \((n = 96, 61.5\%)\) and the challenging behaviors presented by students with E/BD were also considered very problematic \((n = 92, 59.0\%)\). Eighty \((51.3\%)\) respondents considered classroom safety in E/BD settings as the least problematic factor with regards to teacher satisfaction and commitment to their job.
Table 4

*Classroom Conditions that Lead to Teacher Dissatisfaction and Lack of Commitment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Conditions</th>
<th>Most Problematic</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Least Problematic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>n</em></td>
<td>%</td>
<td><em>n</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging behaviors</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Safety</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse skill/ability levels</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Demands</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprepared Teachers</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of content areas</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, respondents were asked to specify under the “other” section additional classroom conditions that they considered problematic, but were not listed on the survey. Responses as outlined by survey respondents include:

- Administration making unreasonable demands and placing emphasis on test scores from high stakes testing at the expense of addressing other social and emotional needs that students with E/BD may exhibit (*n* =7)
- Budgetary issues resulting in shortages of current teaching materials, books and manipulative (*n* =6)
- Derogatory remarks and surly attitudes exhibited by other personnel (*n* =5)
• General apathy and lack of follow though by both administration and parents 
  \((n =10)\)
• Incompetent or minimally trained assistant who lack skills to support students 
  and are not willing to do what they are asked \((n =3)\)
• Lack of involvement or support from parents \((n =8)\)
• Lack of support or coordination with the business community to provide 
  employment opportunities for students \((n =2)\)
• Overcrowded classrooms and lack of quiet spaces where children can regroup 
  following a crisis or emotional melt-down \((n =3)\)
• Too many preps and no time to adequately prepare for the lessons \((n =9)\)

Focus group participants expressed frustration by the lack of consequences for 
students who exhibited challenging and out-of-control behaviors since in most cases 
suspension or sending students to the principal was not an option. Many teachers 
reported feeling frustrated to realize that everybody was not on the same page and 
issues were addressed or dealt with based on the way each individual educator felt was 
appropriate resulting in consequences not being awarded consistently. Respondents 
reported feeling frustrated because if school rules were not consistently followed some 
students would get away with rule violations. In addition, some staff tended to be very 
frustrated, often becoming very negative because these are not the kind of students 
they want to work with and this, in turn, contributes to low school morale.

*Characteristics of the School Environment*

Characteristics of the school environment that impact quality of services provided 
to students with E/BD were examined. Results presented in Table 5. Findings indicate
that 145 (92.9%) of the respondents felt that clearly stated rules, expectations and consequences was an important characteristic of the school environment that impacts that quality of services for students with E/BD.

Table 5

*Characteristics of School Environment that Impacts Quality of Services Provided to Students with E/BD*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodate for individual differences</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear rules, expectations and consequences</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on student outcomes rather than service delivery</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have realistic expectations</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of proactive disciplinary strategies</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, respondents indicated emphasis on students’ outcomes rather than service delivery (n =11, 7.1%) and accommodation for individual differences (n =10, 6.4%) were considered to be unimportant. Survey respondents were asked to specify additional characteristics of the school environment that they considered problematic,
but were not listed on the survey. Responses listed in the “other” section include:

- Inadequate access or lack of supports necessary for the students \((n=8)\)
- Inconsistency of behavior management strategies and lack of effective communication and collaboration among all school personnel \((n=11)\)
- Inexperienced or incompetent teachers placed in classrooms they are not adequately trained to handle \((n=4)\)
- Lack of training and support for district implemented programs \((n=1)\)
- Shortage of placement options for students with E/BD \((n=3)\)

**Support received by Teachers of Students with E/BD**

Educator perception of the nature of support received from different parties involved in the education of students with E/BD was examined. Survey respondents were asked to rate the adequacy of support received from different personnel within their school settings using a Likert type scale. Results are presented in Table 6. Findings indicate that teachers of students with E/BD received adequate support from other special education teachers \((n=111, 71.2\%)\) and their teaching assistants \((n=107, 68.6\%)\). In contrast to \((n=68, 43.6\%)\) and \((n=63, 40.4\%)\) of the respondents who indicated that they received inadequate support from student families and service providers respectively. More than one third of the participants were neutral as to the nature of support they received from general education teachers, student’s families and service providers.
### Table 6

*Adequacy of Support Received by Teachers of Students with E/BD*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Principal</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Administration</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Ed. Teachers</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Family</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Providers</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Ed. Teachers</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistants</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey respondents were asked to rate the adequacy of support received from selected individuals. Respondents who selected “neutral” were asked to add a comment. Responses listed in the “comment” section include:

- Inadequate support from paraprofessionals because they lack training in best practices (*n* = 1)
- Lack of back-up support from school principals and other personnel during crisis (*n* = 6)
- Lack of involvement by the central administration who prefer not to be involved with problems and issues associated with students classified as E/BD (*n* = 11)
• Limited contact with service providers due to their large caseloads ($n=3$)

• Teachers assigned other responsibilities within the school because administrators fail to understand the level of commitment required to effectively address the needs of students with E/BD ($n=1$)

Focus group respondents reported conflicts with general education teachers as students earn the right to go back in to the general education setting. Findings indicate that some general education teachers are often unprepared to receive students with E/BD back into their classroom, especially if they have had the student in the past, prior to the student being moved to the self-contained settings. One respondent noted that some general education teachers had the special education phobia stating that “they will not say anything to the student with E/BD, it’s all that non-verbal stuff, the look, always expecting that they are going to do something wrong….it’s that phobia”. Another participant stated that it is often difficult for these teachers to accept the student back into the classroom and not treat him like he is different from the other students. The participant added that these teachers often see the label of a student’s disability and instantly develop personal prejudices, in most cases focusing on the label rather than the individual student. The group conceded that the labels maybe beneficial, especially if it helps communicate the needs of that child by enhancing eligibility for services.

In addition, the focus group participants indicated that teachers of students with E/BD often lack collaboration with the parents and other service providers. Participants reported lack of parent involvement in the education of their child stating that there were cases where students were abandoned to the teacher and the teacher often has to play multiple roles (e.g., mother, care giver, teacher, crisis counselor). One focus group
participant reiterated that “We bandage them; make sure they get to the doctors; we do all kinds of things that I never thought possible we wear so many different hats …. well everything that they need, I know about my kids more than probably any other teacher ever does, really minute details”. All these many roles can be emotionally draining and time consuming to the teacher and often students whose parents are uninvolved often lack the motivation to learn.

Respondents noted that there have been cases when administrators yielded to the demands of the parents without regard for input from the teachers and, yet, in some cases these demands were unrealistic and did not serve the best interest of the student. Additionally, lack of cooperation from parents was reported. Cases were cited whereby even after equipping parents with the knowledge and skills, they did not try to carry over what was being done at school, making it very difficult to work with their student due to lack of consistency within the different settings. Other respondents cited cases where parents were overwhelmed and did not know what else to do to help their child and had given up. Additionally, cases were reported where parents did not hold their children accountable, always looking for ways to blame the teacher. Hence, findings indicate the need to establish rapport and positive partnerships among all stakeholders. All school personnel, especially teachers, should show unconditional positive support for the family regardless of its background (e.g., low social economic status, cultural and linguistically diverse).

Roles and Responsibilities

To determine the roles and responsibilities associated with teaching students with E/BD, the survey listed several items, and teachers were asked to rate selected
Table 7

Activities Depicting Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers of Students with E/BD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and mentoring</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case coordination</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with administration</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with parents</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-teaching</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/Implement modifications</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing IEP’s</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor adapt. &amp; modifications</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor student progress</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>96.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of Para-professionals</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

activities that depicted their roles and responsibilities as teachers of students with E/BD (See Table 7). Blanton et al., (2006) asserted that teacher roles vary from school to school and in some cases may vary from student to student. Role-related problems have been attributed to high rates of teacher turnover in programs serving students with
E/BD (Billingsley, 2004b; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener et al., 1997; Brownell et al., 2002). Findings indicate that over 90% of the respondents reported that their most important roles and responsibilities as teachers of students with E/BD included monitoring student progress \( (n = 150, 96.2\%)\), collaboration with administration \( (n = 143, 91.7\%)\), designing and implementing modifications to curricular materials \( (n = 142, 91\%)\) and collaboration with parents \( (n = 141, 90.4\%)\). In contrast, respondents indicated that case coordination \( (n = 34, 21.8\%)\) and co-teaching \( (n = 27, 17.3\%)\) were unimportant. Additionally, present findings could not provide an explanation as to why sixty one \( (39.1\%)\) and 40 \( (25.6\%)\) respondents did not rate the importance of case coordination and co-teaching respectively.

**Discussion**

A growing body of evidence reveals that teachers of students with E/BD exhibit relatively high levels of discontent (George et al., 1995). The high levels of discontent coupled with high turnover rates is particularly troubling to the field of special education given the current shortage of teachers who possess the necessary qualifications to teach students with E/BD. Challenges associated with classroom conditions and the work environment have attributed to the high turnover rates exhibited by teachers of students with E/BD. Based on the findings from this study, the most problematic work factors that cause teachers of students with E/BD to leave their jobs include (a) role overload, (b) lack of consistency in decision-making by stakeholders, (c) too much time consumed by non-instructional tasks, and (d) lack of appropriate placements and services for students with E/BD. In addition, classroom conditions reported to be most problematic include (a) teachers having to teach students with diverse skill and ability
levels, (b) lack of motivation among students, (c) and students presenting challenging behavior and discipline issues.

Research Question # 2: What role does teacher qualification and perceived level of preparedness play in career decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD?

Teacher qualifications play a significant role in personal satisfaction and subsequent commitment of teachers to their jobs. The problems experienced by special education teachers during the early years of their career have partly been attributed to inadequate pre-service preparation. Brownell et al., (1995) reported that many special education teachers often feel unprepared for their teaching assignments upon completion of their pre-service teacher preparation program. In order to address specific concerns associated career decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD, a greater understanding of the role played by teacher qualification and their perceived level of preparedness for the different components associated with teaching students with E/BD is needed.

In the present study, teacher qualification was examined using indirect measures (e.g., the highest level of educational preparation, nature of certification held, certification route). The online survey and focus group explored the role played by teacher qualifications and perceived level of preparedness on teacher commitment and career plans for the next 5 years. Survey participants were asked to rate their level of preparedness with regards to effective implementation of selected program components within the different service delivery models, ability to perform instructional practices and strategies associated with teaching students with E/BD, and their perceived competence in teaching specific academic content areas. In addition, respondents rated
their perceived level of preparedness for their teaching assignment based on selected components of their pre-service teacher preparation programs.

*Educational Levels*

Survey participants were asked to select the item that best described their highest level of education attained. As shown in Table 8, 94 (60.3%) of the educators indicated that their highest level of educational preparation was a master’s degree, 29 (18.6%) had a bachelor’s degree and 7 (4.5%) had a doctoral degree. Additionally, 7 (4.5%) of the respondents reported that they had completed some graduate hours and were currently enrolled in school, whereas, 19 (12.2%) had completed graduate hours but were not currently enrolled in school.

*Teacher Certification*

Survey respondents were asked to select the item that best described the certifications they held and their route to certification. Participants whose certifications
were not listed were asked to specify in the “other” box associated with the survey question (See Table 9). Findings indicate that 57 (36.5%) respondents were certified as Table 9

_Certifications Held_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certifications</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/Behavior Disorders</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education – Elementary</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education – Secondary</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic Special Education</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild/Moderate Disabilities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe/Profound</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

general education teachers with elementary level certification, 55 (35.3%) held generic special education certification and 14 (9.0%) held general education secondary level certification. In addition, 7 (4.5%) respondents indicated that they held certifications for teaching students with mild/moderate disabilities, 20 (12.8%) held certifications for E/BD and 2 (1.3%) held certifications for severe/profound. Katsiyannis et al. (1997) reported that several states have moved away from specialized certifications (e.g., E/BD, Severe and Profound, Mild to Moderate), to non-categorical special education certification. Hence, the frequencies obtained in Table 9 could be partly attributed to certification patterns and requirements within the different states.

Responses on certification routes revealed that 62 (39.7%) respondents received
certification together with a master’s degree, 56 (37.8%) certification alongside a bachelor’s degree, 20 (12.8%) certification through alternative certification programs, and 13 (8.3%) certification through a post baccalaureate program. Only two respondents (1.3%) reported not being fully certified and were holders of a provisional certificate currently working on their teacher certification (see Table 10).

Table 10

Route to Certification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification Route (N = 153)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree + certification</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative certification</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Baccalaureate + certification</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate + Certification</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: (Provisional Certificate)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceived preparedness in performing specific instructional practices and strategies

Respondents were asked to rate their ability to perform selected instructional practices and strategies relevant to teaching students with E/BD (See Table 11). One hundred thirty (83.3%) respondents reported feeling prepared in their ability to provide direct instruction, 127 (80.8%) modification of curriculum and 126 (80.7%) felt prepared with regards to their ability to design instructional activities that addressed different
Table 11

*Teacher Perception of Their Ability to Perform Different Instructional Practices*/

**Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Practices</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>% of variance explained by career decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-based behavioral management</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-based instructional practices</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated curriculum practices</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of learning styles</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification of curriculum</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

learning styles. In addition, 40 (25.7%) and 35 (22.4%) of the respondents reported they felt unprepared with regards to differentiating instruction and performing data-based instructional practices respectively. ANOVA was conducted to determine if a significant amount of variance in perceived teacher abilities could be explained by the grouping variable, career decision. The amount of variance explained ($\eta^2$) by career decisions ranged from .01% for modification to curriculum to 9% for delivery of data-based instructional practices. None of the ANOVA's was statistically significant at the .05 alpha level.
Survey participants were asked to rate their level of preparedness with regards to implementing selected program components within the different instructional settings in which services to students with E/BD were provided (See Table 12). Respondents reported that they felt prepared in their ability to (a) develop and monitor IEP’s (n =138, 88.5%), (b) develop lesson plans (n =134, 85.9%), (c) chart student behaviors (n =133, 85.3%), (d) prepare progress reports (n = 131, 84%), and (e) prepare reports for service providers (n = 111, 71.2%). Twenty-eight (18%) of the respondents perceived themselves as unprepared with regards to preparing reports for service providers and charting student behaviors respectively. Five ANOVA’s were conducted to determine if a significant amount of variance in perceived preparedness in implementing program components within their educational setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Components</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>% of variance explained by career decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charting student behaviors</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and monitoring IEP’s</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing lesson plans</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.9%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing reports for providers</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing progress reports</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
components could be explained by the grouping variable, career decision. The amount of variance explained ($\eta^2$) by career decisions ranged from 2.5% for preparation of reports for service providers to 7.2% for developing and monitoring IEP’s and developing lesson plans. None of the five ANOVA’s was statistically significant at the .05 alpha level.

Additionally, respondents were asked to specify other components they felt were important, but were not listed with the survey question. Additional program components as delineated by respondents include:

- Conducting functional behavior assessments ($n = 3$)
- Developing behavior intervention plans ($n = 5$)
- Developing positive behavior support plans ($n = 5$)
- Transition planning ($n = 2$)
- Writing evaluation reports ($n = 3$)

**Perceived preparedness based on teacher preparation**

Survey respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of preparedness in implementing selected program components based on their pre-service preparation (See Table 13). Findings indicate that 124 (79.4%) of the respondents perceived that they were adequately prepared to assess learning differences. Additionally, 123 (78.9%) perceived themselves as prepared for delivery of effective instructional strategies and instructional planning based on their pre-service preparation. In contrast, several respondents indicated that their pre-service training may not have adequately prepared them in the areas of (a) behavior management ($n = 27, 17.3$), individualizing curriculum ($n = 23, 14.7$), and knowledge of disability area ($n = 22, 14.1$). Six
ANOVA’s were conducted to determine if a significant amount of variance in perceived preparedness based on teacher preparation could be explained by the grouping variable, career decision. The amount of variance explained ($\eta^2$) by career decisions ranged from 2.1% for individualizing curriculum to 6.3% for assessment of learning differences (See Table 13). None of the six ANOVA’s was statistically significant at the .05 alpha level.

Table 13

*Perceived Level of Preparedness Based on Pre-Service Preparation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Components</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>% of variance explained by career decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of learning differences</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior management</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective instructional strategies</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualizing curriculum</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional planning</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of disability area</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, respondents were asked to specify other components they viewed as important but were not included in the list associated with the survey question. Other components specified by respondents include:

- Performing functional behavioral assessments ($n=3$)
Developing research-based academic interventions ($n=3$)

Developing research-based behavioral interventions ($n=5$)

**Teaching Academic Content and Skill Areas**

Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of competence in teaching various academic content and skill areas (see Table 14). The four areas in which respondents felt most prepared were (a) social skills ($n=146, 93.6\%$), (b) behavioral skills ($n=141, 90.4\%$), (c) reading ($n=132, 84.6\%$), and (d) language arts ($n=130, 83.3\%$). The two areas reported where respondents felt most unprepared were (a) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Content and Skill Areas</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>% of variance explained by career decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral skills</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language arts</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational skills</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
vocational skills \((n = 49, 31.4\%)\), and (b) science \((n = 33, 21.2\%)\). ANOVA was conducted to determine if a significant amount of variance in perceived level of preparedness to teach different content could be explained by the grouping variable, career decision. The amount of variance explained \((\cdot)\) by career decisions ranged from 1.6\% for language arts to 11.6\% for social studies. None of the ANOVA’s was statistically significant at the .05 alpha level.

**Career Decisions**

The high annual special education turnover have been attributed to a variety of factors ranging from transfers to other positions within education (Billingsley, 2004b; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener et al., 1997) and leaving for personal reasons (Billingsley, 2004a). In this study, survey respondents were asked to indicate their career plans for the next 5 years (See Table 15). Findings indicate that 46 (29.5\%) respondents plan to

**Table 15**

**Career Plans Over the Next 5 Years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Decisions</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in current position</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer - general education</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer – positions within education</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer - work with mild/moderate disabilities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quit – positions outside of education</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
stay in their current teaching assignments. Only 7 (4.5%) respondents indicated that they plan to leave teaching for other positions outside of education. Of the remaining group, 18 (11.5%) indicated that they will retire within the next 5 years; whereas, 50.6% indicated that they will transfer other positions within education. In addition, only 2 (1.3%) respondents reported being undecided about their plans for the next 5 years.

Discussion

Efforts to address the diverse needs of students with E/BD should ensure that students with E/BD are taught by teachers who possess the prerequisite knowledge and skills. Educators in this study rated their perceived level of preparedness to perform specific tasks associated with educating students with E/BD. Based on the findings of this study, teacher qualification and teacher perception of their level of preparedness did not play a significant role in career decisions of teachers of students with E/BD. Most teachers perceived themselves as prepared with regards to (a) ability to perform different instructional practices and strategies, and (b) implement different program components within their educational setting. In addition, many felt that their college preparation program adequately prepared them to work with students with E/BD.

Research Question # 3: What are the pre-service and in-service training needs for teachers of students with E/BD?

Pre-service Needs

Respondents were asked to specify ideas and topics they felt should be included as part of pre-service teacher preparation for teachers of students with E/BD. Findings indicate that most focus group respondents felt that pre-service preparation basically addressed theory, but did not provide adequate exposure to practical aspects of the job.
nor experiences related to the reality of working with the students in the classrooms. Respondents felt that hands-on training through practicum and teaching practice should be a major component of teacher preparation. One respondent referred to college courses as “required a course for one to get the degree, but as far as preparation for teaching is concerned, they don’t do much.” Hence, there was a general consensus regarding the need for all future teachers to take specialized courses or classes in special education, preferably preparation in E/BD.

Several participants recommend that opportunities to participate in organized practicum in E/BD settings should be available to all teachers regardless of their certification as this will provide actual hands-on experience necessary for teachers to effectively work with students with E/BD in any setting. In addition, pre-service teachers should have experience in all facets of special education programs (e.g., academic, career, employment and counseling which should be coupled with opportunities to observe, monitor, visit an E/BD program to obtain some practical insights). Pre-teaching practicum experiences should include intensive behavior management training, along with best-practice for teaching struggling and unmotivated students.

One focus group participant recommended that practical courses that provide early exposure and preparation prior to working with students with disabilities will provide ample opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop the skills. Participants reached a general consensus that all students who enter college with a degree plan for education should have early exposure to students with different disabilities, preferably as early as the freshman year or a mandatory internship where all sophomores and juniors are expected to work in a variety of settings where students with E/BD are
served. Respondents felt that this will help streamline or flush out pre-service teachers who are basically stuck in the rut given that they may have already invested lots of money and time and it may be too late to get out of it. Such individuals were likely to get into teaching just for the sake of it and would most likely quit the profession after the first couple of years.

Respondents suggested that teachers of students with E/BD should also have the opportunity (a) to practice a variety of academic strategies, (b) engage in practical data collection strategies necessary for instructional planning, and (c) develop effective strategies for crisis intervention. In addition, they felt it is important that all educators, regardless of their certification, should have a strong understanding of mental health issues and strategies to assist students with behavioral/emotional disabilities. Pre-service teachers in particular need to know what has worked and not worked in the past in regards to working with students with E/BD. It is imperative that pre-service teachers understand E/BD and how the diagnosis manifests itself in the classroom in terms of behavioral, emotional, or academic needs. They should strive to understand how the students get to where they are emotionally and academically and always keep the welfare of students with E/BD a top priority.

Other findings indicate that teachers who work with students with E/BD should have an increased understanding of effective interventions, evidence-based practices and proactive ideas for addressing discipline problems, and how to de-escalate situations. In addition, they should be skilled (a) at preventing or recognizing “trigger cues” before situations escalate and (b) in dealing appropriately with aggressive behaviors. It is imperative that teachers be equipped with knowledge of effective
behavior strategies and management techniques that can be used to effectively address the needs of students with different disabilities.

Many teachers of students with E/BD often find themselves in situations where they have to teach many different curriculum areas to students with diverse needs. To address this problem, teacher preparation programs should ensure that all pre-service teachers receive practical training on how to prepare lessons that meet the standards of students with diverse educational skills and abilities. Other training needs as outlined by respondents include:

- Ability to distinguish when behavior is direct result of educational inability and not ED \((n = 10)\)
- Best practices in working with special education paraprofessionals \((n = 5)\)
- Characteristics of behavioral and emotional disabilities \((n = 8)\)
- Comprehensive assessment of academic skills, social skills, life skills and vocational skills all in an effort to determine appropriate placement \((n = 11)\)
- Data collection for both academic and behavioral data \((n = 15)\)
- Data analysis and reporting \((n = 10)\)
- Effective classroom management \((n = 4)\)
- Effective strategies for teaching reading to struggling readers and the integration of literacy skills within the content areas \((n = 5)\)
- Effective team teaching techniques \((n = 3)\)
- Preparation of lesson plans \((n = 2)\)
- Restraint training \((n = 4)\)
• Strategies for conducting Functional Behavior Assessments and writing Positive Behavior Support Plans \((n = 10)\)

• Strategies for dealing with the various types of challenging behaviors \((n = 15)\)

_in-Service Needs_

Students who exhibit severe challenging behaviors have often experienced failure for a very long time and they are often not motivated to learn. This challenge may be effectively addressed if the local education agencies develop uniform plans for servicing students with E/BD as well as uniformity in the identification process and placement. It is imperative that school personnel should ensure that they offer standard training and orientation to all personnel who are new to the school district that addresses all specific programs and district paperwork requirements. An understanding of the use of instructional technology as a means of engaging students and making their learning experiences relevant and meaningful is also necessary.

Findings indicate that it is important that all educators (entire faculty/staff) receive some form of training that introduces them to the basic characteristics of students with E/BD. A few respondents felt that support personnel are often lacking the knowledge on how to handle challenges presented by students with E/BD and often many of them were terrified and lacked the insight on what to do during crisis situations. In addition, teams charged with developing school-wide positive behavior supports should ensure that all personnel working with students with E/BD are involved in the development and setting up of the program. Because teachers working with students with E/BD often have to deal with students with a variety of abilities and at different grade levels in one classroom, it is necessary that they receive ongoing training in strategies to differentiate
instruction. It is necessary that teachers of students with E/BD have continuing education on effective research-based strategies for addressing the needs of students challenging behaviors.

Recommendations for in-service training appropriate for teachers who work with students with E/BD as outlined by respondents include:

- Effective and proactive behavior intervention strategies ($n = 15$)
- Effective collaboration strategies with regular education teachers especially those who believe that E/BD students cannot function successfully within general arena ($n = 11$)
- Effective strategies for curriculum modification, differentiation strategies and remediation of student deficits ($n = 10$)
- Incorporation of instructional technology as a means of engaging students and making their learning experiences relevant and meaningful ($n = 3$)
- Incorporation of transition through the IEP process and developing quality transition plans ($n = 5$)
- In-services on effective research based assessments tools in addition to ongoing training to ensure that teachers are aware of changes in state assessment as well as updates on rules and regulations ($n = 6$)
- Ongoing training to ensure that teachers are aware of requirements so that all special education paperwork are in compliance with federal guidelines ($n = 4$)
- Research based academic strategies to address the diverse needs of students with E/BD ($n = 2$)
• Strategies to enhance and promote parental/family involvement in their child’s education \((n = 16)\)

• Strategies to differentiate or diversify curriculum to ensure that the needs of each student are met \((n = 10)\)

• Team teaching \((n = 6)\)

As we mainstream special education students, more formal training is needed for the general education teachers. Sensitivity training is necessary so as to increase awareness of all educators on the importance of empathy and use of appropriate language when dealing with students with E/BD. With the current push for reintegration and inclusion of students with E/BD into the general education setting, it is important educators receive adequate training through in-services that address the issue of inclusion, ramifications associated with it, and the role of general education teachers in the process. One participant recommended the need for departments to be defused as far as in-services were concerned, with special education in-services being planned for everyone. There was a general consensus that in most school districts only special education personnel attended special education in-services, whereas the general education teachers got all the core content training in reading, math, science, and social studies without regard for the special education teachers who teach these subjects and the need for them to be included in these in-services as well.

All training should emphasize increased awareness of the different learning styles and how to develop programs that effectively address the needs of students that are included within their classrooms. Training for general education teachers should incorporate effective inclusion techniques for successful reintegration of students with
E/BD back into the regular education classroom. In-services should be tailor-made to address specific needs within the schools. One respondent argued that the most valuable in-services would be those that focus on the unique needs of the program versus those required to meet externally imposed standards. Furthermore, all teachers who work with students with E/BD regardless of their instructional settings should receive ongoing training in crisis management and non-violent intervention with specific emphasis on de-escalation and pro-active behavior management strategies for students with E/BD.

Other suggestions include extra training in dealing with specific disability conditions (e.g., effectively addressing specialized needs associated with cerebral palsy, aspergers, fetal alcohol syndrome, traumatic brain injury). The respondent argued that some basic refreshing was necessary since teachers often get too attached to the few approaches they have learned in the past regardless of their effectiveness. In addition, another participant indicated the need for extra training in dealing with chemically dependent students which are increasing in numbers within the schools and strategies on how to be resilient even in the face of ongoing crisis within the work environment.

In addition, there should be adequate opportunities for teachers who work with students with E/BD to collaborate with other E/BD teachers within the school district. One respondent felt that it was essential for teachers of students with E/BD, especially the self-contained teachers, to visit other classrooms/teachers within their school or within the district to observe and learn new strategies that they could incorporate in their classrooms. Another respondent indicated that the most valuable in-service time has
always been the opportunity to meet with and collaborate with other E/BD teachers to share advice, ideas and strategies and expressed the need for ongoing meetings and networking between E/BD teachers as a form of support group. Other recommendations include the need for local education agencies to provide on-going training on research-based strategies and best practices for all personnel who work with students with E/BD and those at risk for school failure. One respondent lamented that all training, inservices from district level, stopped when they took the job and they were not allowed to use professional time to go to district-offered in-services.

Discussion

While the reasons for high turnover rates among teachers of students with E/BD vary from study to study, findings reveal the need for all future teachers to take specialized courses in special education. Dynamic interactions between personal and environmental variables have been associated with decisions by teachers to stay or leave their jobs. The need for adequate exposure and preparation of pre-service teachers through extended practicum or field experience may provide ample opportunities to (a) bridge the gap between knowledge and practice, (b) equip and develop effective skills for addressing behavioral and academic needs of students with E/BD, and (c) expose them to different program options available for students with E/BD. Additionally, recommendations for in-service training include (a) the need for standard training on characteristics of E/BD for all personnel who work with students with E/BD, and (b) effective strategies for addressing the academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs of students with E/BD offered to all teachers regardless of their teaching assignment.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined personal and work factors that compel teachers of students with E/BD to leave or to stay in their jobs. Invitations were sent to educators currently working or have worked in the past worked with students with E/BD soliciting their participation in the online survey and focus groups. Quantitative information generated from the survey was analyzed using frequency distributions and ANOVA, whereas, qualitative information from sections of the survey questions listed as “other” and focus group discussions were analyzed by summarizing and sorting information into different categories. The results were presented in narrative and tabular form and organized in response to each of the research questions.

Summary
The sample comprised of teachers who currently work with or have worked with students with E/BD in the past and are currently members of CCBD or have attended at least one CCBD professional development event. More than half of the participants had 10 years or more of teaching experience of which at least 5 or more had been in settings where they worked with students with E/BD. Participants were drawn from a variety of instructional settings, however, approximately 50% of the participants taught in self-contained settings within a regular or on a separate campus. 99% of the participants were certified teachers and approximately 80% of the sample has taken graduate courses. Based on these characteristics, interpretation of these results should be done with caution given that the participants in this study may differ from typical pool of educators and conclusions may be limited to individuals with background
characteristics that are similar to those who participated in this study.

Findings indicate that only 29.5% of the teachers from this sample plan to stay in their current positions for the next 5 years. With the exception those who planned to stay (29.5%), retire (11.5%), leave for other positions outside of education (4.5%), other participants indicated that they would transfer to other positions within education. The projected high teacher turnover within the next 5 years as depicted in the findings, were mainly attributed to workplace variables and classroom conditions. Both variables are likely to be associated with high levels of dissatisfaction and lack of commitment eventually leading to decisions by teachers of students with E/BD to leave their job.

Participants indicated that role overload and involvement in too many non-instructional tasks were the most problematic work variables that caused them to leave their jobs. Consequently, teacher dissatisfaction and lack of commitment were mainly attributed to classroom conditions typical within self-contained environments where students lacked the motivation to participate in academic tasks and teachers were expected to work with students with diverse abilities and skills. In addition, respondents emphasized the importance of settings realistic expectations for the students and having a clear set of rules and consequences.

Most respondents perceived of themselves as being adequately prepared for responsibilities associated with teaching students with E/BD. More than 70% of respondents reiterated that they felt prepared in implementing different program components within their educational setting and their ability to perform different instructional practices and strategies. Additionally, over 70% of respondents indicated that their pre-service preparation prepared them for the responsibilities associated with
their current teaching assignment and confirmed their perceived competence with regards to teaching most of the academic content areas. Based on the findings of this study, we can conclude that the low percentage of variances associated with the grouping variable, career decisions did not explain a significant amount of variance in perceived levels of preparedness with regards to implementation of various program components and instructional activities. Hence, teacher qualifications and perceptions did not play a significant role in career decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD.

In addition, findings reveal the need for all future teachers to take specialized courses in special education to ensure that all teachers understand the unique characteristics and needs of students with E/BD. Respondents recommended that pre-service teachers regardless of their certification would benefit from actual hands-on training through field experiences and practicum in instructional settings serving students with E/BD as this would help bridge the gap between knowledge and practice.

Other training needs considered to be of importance to pre-service teachers include data collection strategies for instructional planning, assessments, evidence-based practices, research-based behavioral and academic interventions and effective strategies for crisis management. Recommendations for on-going in-service training for teachers already in the field include proactive behavior and academic interventions, use of effective research based assessment tools, research based academic strategies to address diverse needs of learners and the use of instructional technology to engage students and to make learning experiences relevant and meaningful.
Implications

Efforts to reverse the projected high turnover rates should concentrate on developing effective retention programs. One strategy highly recommended by most respondents was the idea of matching all newly hired or even experienced teachers who are struggling with qualified mentors. Effective mentoring programs should be developed for all new teachers working with students with E/BD in the different instructional settings to ensure ongoing support as they learn and settle at their jobs. One focus group participant summarized it by saying that “it all boils down to appropriate mentorship for all novice teachers.” It’s imperative that local education agencies have a pool of well trained mentors capable for working with all students and have the attitude that all students are guaranteed the right to learn regardless of their disability. The philosophy of appropriate inclusive education for all students should be well ingrained in them so that as new teachers come in, they can pass it on. This mindset needs to be a foundational, all encompassing culture that will perpetuate a positive culture that promotes acceptance of all children regardless of their status.

In addition, efforts to create a highly qualified and stable teaching force should focus on addressing the work conditions and classroom factors responsible for teacher dissatisfaction ultimately leading to low commitment. Based on the responses and suggestions from both the online survey and focus groups, efforts by local education agencies to address the problem of teacher turnover should ensure mandatory team collaboration between all educators working with students who are at risk for school failure or those who have been identified for referral to receive special education services. Role issues, case load sizes and teacher-student ratios should be addressed
to ensure that teachers can affectively address the academic needs of students with E/BD. In addition, in-services should be streamlined to ensure that all general education teachers benefit from special education in-services that will equip them with proactive behavioral and academic interventions in an effort to address the diversity within their classrooms.

Responsibility for students with E/BD often possess a major challenge for teachers of students with E/BD because other educators often do not want to take responsibility for the students assuming that the special education teacher is solely responsible for these students. It is important that all educators should work together for the ultimate good of the student putting their prejudices and stereotypes behind. All educators should receive adequate training that addresses the unique characteristics of students with E/BD to equip them with strategies to proactively address challenging behaviors and the diverse needs. Expectations should be clearly defined together with the rules and consequences associated with rule violations. Consistency is required amongst all educators to ensure that everyone is on the same page and it is imperative that all educators collaborate on expectations and uphold flexibility in their efforts to include and support students with E/BD.

Recommendations

Further research is needed to examine the quality of teachers especially those who stay and how that translates into program success in terms of academic success and post-school outcomes for students with E/BD. The findings of this study indicate that problems within the work environment were solely responsible for the high teacher turnover rates projected among teachers of students with E/BD. Efforts to reverse
teacher turnover should focus on identifying the work environments specific to each
school within the local education agency and retention efforts should be localized to the
individual campuses. Most respondents in this study perceived themselves as prepared
with regards to implementation of different program components and their ability to
perform specific tasks relevant to teaching students with E/BD. However, more than
50% of the respondents indicated that they planned to transfer to other positions within
education. The mass exodus of teachers of students with E/BD has a major impact on
program stability and quality. Hence, the need for further research on strategies that
local education agency may implement to develop desirable work environments that
would enhance the feelings of teachers of students with E/BD as well as their
commitment to stay.

Further research examining characteristics of teachers of students with E/BD
specifically those who have not completed any course work beyond a bachelor’s degree
and choose to stay in their teaching positions is warranted. More than 50% of the
respondents in this study were female teachers, holding a masters degree and had
more than 10 years teaching experience of which 5 years or more involved teaching
students with E/BD. Based on these characteristics, most respondents in this study do
not fit the criteria for at risk group for attrition as outlined by researchers (e.g., Singer,
1992; Billingsley, 2004b) and yet more than 50% indicated that they planned to transfer
to other positions within education. Given the current status of supply and demand for
highly qualified teachers for students with E/BD, teacher retention efforts should be
integral in addressing the problem. This information may help local education agencies
in their efforts to develop effective retention policies.
APPENDIX A

UNITED STATES CENSUS REGIONS
**Midwestern Region**

Illinois  Indiana  Iowa  Kansas
Michigan  Minnesota  Missouri  Nebraska
North Dakota  Ohio  South Dakota  Wisconsin

**Northeastern Region**

Connecticut  Maine  Massachusetts  New Hampshire
Rhode Island  Vermont  New Jersey  New York
Pennsylvania

**Southern Region**

Alabama  Arkansas  Delaware  Washington, D.C.
Georgia  Florida  Louisiana  South Carolina
Maryland  Mississippi  Oklahoma  North Carolina
Tennessee  Virginia  Kentucky  West Virginia

**Western Region**

Alaska  Arizona  California  Colorado
Hawaii  Idaho  Montana  Nevada
Oregon  Utah  Wyoming  Washington
New Mexico
APPENDIX B

INVITATION LETTER TO SURVEY PARTICIPANTS
May 1, 2007

Dear Colleague,

As you are aware, the field of special education today faces the challenge of creating a qualified, diverse, and stable teaching force given the number of special education teachers who leave the field annually. Of primary concern is the exodus among teachers of students with E/BD who appear to leave their jobs at higher proportions than other special education teachers. Therefore, I am inviting teachers of students with E/BD to participate in an online survey which will examine factors responsible for teacher turnover among teachers of students with E/BD. It is expected that the survey will take approximately 20 -30 minutes of your time. Research compiled from this study will provide information that will assist policymakers to understand factors contributing to career decisions made by teachers of students with E/BD in an effort to develop effective retention policies and practices.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you are willing to participate:

1. Read the informed consent, and then click the link to direct you to the website.
2. Enter the 4 digit invitation code to access the survey: 0000
3. Complete the survey by clicking the radio button that best depicts your answer. You have the right to skip any question you choose not to answer. If you decide to withdraw your participation you may do so at any time by simply leaving the web site.
4. Click the “Submit” button at the close of the survey.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey.

Sincerely,

Beatrice Adera
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT NOTICE FOR FOCUS GROUP
My name is Beatrice Adera and I am a graduate student in the Technology and Cognition Department, Special Education at the University of North Texas. I am conducting a focus group that will examine factors responsible for teacher turnover among teachers of students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders (E/BD). The focus group discussion will examine teacher characteristics and work factors that compel teachers of students with E/BD to quit or stay in their teaching positions. The discussions will also explore teacher perception on quality of pre-service preparation and ongoing in-service training and their impact on career decisions.

Information obtained from the participants will be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes. Contact information will be securely stored and used only to disseminate information regarding focus group meeting time and location. The focus group meeting will last approximately one and a half to two hours long and discussions will be audio-taped to record all information exchanged during the discussion process. On completion of the focus groups, the audiotapes will be transcribed to provide data (information) for analysis. Once the data has been analyzed all audiotapes will be destroyed.

No individual responses will be disclosed to anyone because all data will be reported on a group basis. All participants will be assigned pseudo-names for use during the discussion. You have the right to skip answering any question you choose not to answer during the discussion. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study; however, if you decide to withdraw your participation you may do so at any time by simply exiting the venue of the meeting. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Ms. Beatrice Adera or the faculty advisor, Dr. Lyndall M. Bullock.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.
By participating in the focus group discussion, you are confirming that you understand your rights as a research participant and voluntarily consent to participate in this study. You understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw at any point during the discussion will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
APPENDIX D

ELECTRONIC SURVEY
This survey is designed to determine (a) personal and work environment factors responsible for attrition among teachers of students with E/BD, (b) impact of teacher preparation and perceived level of preparedness on teacher commitment and career decisions, (c) pre-service and in-service training needs of teachers of students with E/BD. Please follow the directions and complete all items on the survey form.

Part 1 – Demographic Information

1. Gender:  _______ female  _______ male

2. State of residence?  ______________________________

3. (a) Who item BEST describes the setting in which you work: (check one)

   _____ urban  _____ suburban  ______ rural

   (b) Which item BEST describes your teaching assignment level:

   _____ elementary school all levels (grades 1 – 6)

   _____ public elementary school

   _____ private elementary school

   _____ public middle school

   _____ private middle school

   _____ public high school

   _____ private high school

   _____ secondary school (includes middle/high school ages)

   _____ other (please specify in box provided)
4. Which item BEST describes the instructional setting in which you work: (check one)

___ general education
___ inclusion
___ resource
___ self-contained
___ separate self-contained day school
___ other: specify ________________________________

5. (a) How many years teaching experience (TOTAL) have you had?

_______ first year of teaching
_______ more than one year but less than 5
_______ more than 5 but less than 10
_______ 10 years or more

(b) How many years have you been teaching students with E/BD?

_______ 0-1 years
_______ 2-3 years
_______ 4-5 years
_______ 5 years or more

6. What is your highest level of education?

_______ bachelor’s degree
_______ some graduate (currently enrolled)
_______ some graduate (not enrolled)
_____ masters degree
_____ doctoral degree

7. (a) What certification(s) do you hold?

_______ general education elementary
_______ general education secondary
_______ generic special education
_______ emotional/behavior disorders
_______ mild/moderate disabilities
_______ severe-profound disabilities
_______ other: (please specify in box provided)

(b) Which BEST describes your certification route:

_______ bachelors + certification
_______ alternative certification
_______ post baccalaureate + certification
_______ graduate + certification
_______ other: (please specify in box provided)

Part II – Work Environment

8. Listed below are work related variables responsible for attrition of teachers who teach students with E/BD. Rate each of these problems using a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most problematic and 5 being the least problematic.
a) constant changes due to too many rules and regulations  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

b) feelings of isolation  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

c) inadequate induction  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

d) lack of appropriate placements/services for the student’s  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

e) lack of consistency in decision making for students  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

f) relationships with the community (external)  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

g) role overload - too much paperwork with very limited time  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

h) too much time consumed by non-instructional tasks  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

i) others: List and rate others that are problematic

i.1. ______________________________________  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

i.2. ______________________________________  
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

9. Listed below are some classroom conditions that lead to dissatisfaction and lack of commitment among teachers of students with E/BD. Rate each of these problems using a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most problematic and 5 being the least problematic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>most problematic</th>
<th>least problematic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) lack of motivation among students</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) student present challenging behaviors/ discipline issues</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) teachers have to teach many different content</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

95
areas that they are not qualified to teach

d) teachers feel unprepared to handle complex
    behavioral challenges presented by student’s

e) teachers have to teach students with a broad
    range of skills and abilities

f) unsafe work environment

g) unreasonable demands from parents

h) others: List and rate others that are problematic.
   h.1. _______________________________ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
   h.2. _______________________________ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

10. Listed below are some characteristics of the school environment that impacts
    quality of services provided to students with EBD. Use the Likert scale to rate the
    importance of these items: 1 - Extremely unimportant; 2 – Unimportant; 3 –
    Neutral; 4 – Important; 5 - Extremely Important

    1  2  3  4  5

    a) accommodate for individual differences
        _______________________________ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

    b) clear rules, expectations and consequences
        _______________________________ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

    c) focus on student outcomes rather than service
        delivery
        _______________________________ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

    d) having realistic expectations
        _______________________________ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

    e) use of proactive disciplinary strategies
        _______________________________ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

    f) others: List and rate other characteristics.
       f.1. _______________________________ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
11. Rate the adequacy of support received from each of the following individuals using a Likert scale from 1 to 3, with 1 being inadequate, 2 being neutral and 3 being the adequate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) building principal</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) central administration</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) general education teachers</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) family (including guardians or caretakers)</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) service providers (juvenile justice, mental health, family services, vocational rehabilitation services)</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) special education teachers</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) teaching assistants</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Comment: add comment in BOX below if you selected NEUTRAL.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Listed below are a set of activities that depicts the roles and responsibilities of teachers of students with E/BD. In the box preceding each activity, identify all activities that you engage in. Check all that apply.

- ______ advocacy and mentoring
- ______ collaboration with administrators
- ______ collaboration with parents
- ______ case coordination
- ______ co-teach with another teachers
____ delivery of direct instruction
____ designing and implementing modifications of curricular materials
____ developing IEP’s
____ monitoring use of curricular adaptations and modifications in general education
____ monitoring student progress
____ student scheduling
____ supervision of paraprofessionals
____ others: List in box

Part III – Teacher Preparation

13. Given the demands within different service delivery models serving students with E/BD, rate your level of preparedness with regards to implementing each of the following [1- unprepared; 2 – somewhat unprepared; 3 – neutral (no opinion); 4 – somewhat prepared; 5 - prepared]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>unprepared</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____ charting student behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ developing and monitoring IEP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ developing lesson plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ preparing reports for service provider's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ writing progress notes for parents and other teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Several instructional practices/strategies are listed below. Rate your ability to perform skills relevant to teaching students with E/BD [1 - difficult to perform; 2 - somewhat difficult to perform; 3 – neutral (no opinion); 4 – somewhat easy to perform; 5 – easy to perform]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>difficult to perform</th>
<th>easy to perform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differentiated instruction</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direct instruction</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructional practices based on data driven decisions</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behavioral management practices based on data driven decisions</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrated curriculum practices</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of learning styles</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modified curriculum</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others: List and Rate</td>
<td>___ ___ ___ ___ ___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Listed below are some components of teacher preparation. Rate perceived level of preparedness based on pre-service preparation [1 - unprepared; 2 – somewhat unprepared; 3 – neutral (no opinion); 4 – somewhat prepared; 5 -
Listed below are specific academic content areas. Rate perceived competence in teaching various content areas [1 - incompetent; 2 - somewhat incompetent; 3 - neutral (no opinion); 4 - somewhat competent; 5 - competent]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
<th>Somewhat Incompetent</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Competent</th>
<th>Competent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Behavioral Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Language Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Social Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
f) social studies

g) reading

h) vocational skills

17. What are your career plans over the next 5 years?

__________ retirement

__________ transfer to general education

__________ transfer to work with students with mild or moderate disabilities

__________ transfer to other positions within education (e.g., administration, counseling, educational diagnostician)

__________ quit education for positions outside education

__________ other: specify in BOX ________________________

18. Identify pre-service/in-service needs that you perceive as important in your efforts to educate students with E/BD.

Pre-service

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

In-service

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

We appreciate your time and expertise in completing this survey. We would be glad to share a summary of the results. If you would like a summary report, please place your email address in the space below:

______________________________________________________
If you would like to participate in a focus group examining factors responsible for teacher turnover, please list your name and contact information in the box below:
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONING ROUTE
1. Why did you choose special education teaching as a career? Why students with E/BD?

2. What conflicts do you encounter within the school community? How do the working conditions within your school impact your ability to effectively address the needs of your students?

3. How do you perceive your pre-service teacher preparation program in preparing for your current position? To teach academic content? Planning and delivery of effective instruction? Managing challenging behaviors? Developing effective programs for students with E/BD?

4. Working with students with E/BD and their families is quite a challenge. What are some of the most difficult/rewarding aspects of your job? [name any positive and/or negative experiences].

5. What are your career plans over the next 5 years? Name factors that influence your career decision (quit or stay)?

6. Any final thoughts on how we can help teachers be more competent in working with students with E/BD?
APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS
Venue: Denton Public Library Meeting Room

Date: May 23rd, 2007 at 7:00pm

In attendance:

# 1 Male middle school teacher who works with students with E/BD in a self contained setting

# 2 Female middle school teacher who works with students with E/BD in a self contained setting

# 3 Female elementary school teacher who works with students with E/BD in an alternative educational setting

# 4 Female high school teacher who works with students with E/BD in an inclusion setting

# 5 Female middle school teacher who works with students with E/BD in a resource classroom setting

**General welcome and guidelines**

**Moderator:** Thank you for coming. I will take a few minutes to read the informed consent and review the guidelines before we start. Our discussion this evening will examine factors responsible for teacher turnover among teachers of students with E/BD. And my first question is: Why did you choose special education teaching as a career and more specifically why did you choose to work with students with E/BD? Anyone can start.

# 5: I will go first, I guess I started as a substitute teacher, and most classes I
substituted in were special education classes. At that time I did not really know much about special education, however, very soon I learnt that there was a program at the local college that would enable me to undertake a Masters in special education and I would also pursue my teacher certification along with it. The good news also was that I would be eligible for a grant that would pay for my college tuition in addition to giving me a stipend every month. I decided to apply for the program and was accepted.

# 4: I started off as a teacher’s aide and basically when I took up the job I did not know what I was getting into, but just accepted the position because I needed a job. After working with several different teachers, I realized that after all I enjoyed working with the students, especially the challenging ones, so I went ahead and enrolled in an alternative certification program to pursue my teacher certification.

# 3: laughing, I also stumbled into a similar masters program and that’s how I ended up in special education. When I went to college during my undergraduate years, I knew I wanted to teacher and was planning on being a general education teacher. Even in my wildest dreams, I did not plan on being special education teacher.

# 2: I always know I wanted to be a special education teacher, so when I went to college I just went ahead and did what I wanted to do.

# 1: I started off as music major and was planning to go into music education. After graduating from college, I had a short stint in New Jersey working with autistic students and I started from there.

**Moderator: What conflicts do you encounter within the school community?**

# 5: Ownership or responsibility for the kids is kind of tough to know, you know some teachers do not want to take responsibility for the students. It’s like the students always
belong to you as the ED teacher and you have to figure out how to best meet their needs.

# 3: Sending the kids to the principles office or you are suspended is not an option because they do not want to be there. We just always have to deal with it. I think aa.. probably what I run into the most is that everybody is not always on the same page, aa.. we don't all always have the same view aa.. I think too to some extent sometimes people always want to exert their weight. You find that if one student does something, then they receive the consequence whereas if another student does something, the consequences are not consistently followed. Or there are no consequences all together especially for the manipulative students. So sometimes the issue of inconsistency could be very difficult for me to deal with.

# 4: Support or lack of it; there are many teachers who do not know how to deal with these kids and excessive workload

# 3: I work in a alternative program which is pretty much a self contained school and there is no where to send students even if it was necessary to do so. It's usually frustrating to realize that everybody is not on the same page and tend to deal with or address issues based on what they believe. Basically what I am saying is that there are some people who are so stuck in their way of doing things and always believe that things have to work their own way. They feel that everyone has to tow the line or else things cannot proceed. Basically they are not open to listen to what others are saying. Another issue that drives me nuts is the lack of consistency on the consequences. Some students get in trouble for any rule they violate whereas others literally get away with murder.
Moderator: Could you explain further using specific examples?

# 3: Yes, I guess what I am trying to say if the school rules are not consistently followed when it come to some specific students, however, others would get away with the same rule violation, if not even worse violations.

Moderator: How do the working conditions within your school impact your ability to effectively address the needs of your students?

# 3: I have been where I am for the last 4 years and I think the most important thing I have had to learn which is a skills I will take to a different job is that sometimes you have to be quiet. I have learnt to be humble, keep your comments to yourself and keep your face from showing what you are really thinking and I have got a lot of help with it because my best friend works in the same institution and she is aware and knows when I am about to explode and she tells me I can see it and if I can see it then everybody can see it

# 2: Another problem is the issue of lack of collaboration between agencies. You find that the transition process in and out of school is not happening the way it should. The different service providers like the mental health professionals, juvenile justice system do not work together for the good of some of these students. You find that the children miss school for several days due to being involved in a major crisis or being involved in and yet even after being gone for as long as a week nobody bothers to let you know what is going on. These students are just dropped off and their parents or caregivers whoever they are leave without even saying a word. So basically what I am saying collaboration with the different service providers is not taking place and my concern is the lack of or the gap in transitioning services.
Moderator: # 5 do you have anything to add?

# 5: I agree with what my colleagues have said.

Moderator: How about Number 1, do you have anything to add?

# 1: No, I also agree that collaboration is a big problem, more specifically even within the school environment, general education teachers, special education teachers and administrators often fail to collaborate amongst themselves or even with the parents for the benefit of the student.

# 4: Yes, sometimes we have administrators who yield to the demands of the parents which in some cases maybe unrealistic. In many cases they end up disapproving the teachers’ suggestions which in most cases is in the best interest of the student.

Moderator: And that leads us to our next question. We all know that working with some families’ maybe quite a challenge. What are some of most difficult aspects of your job?

# 4: Parents think their children are angels

# 1: One major thing I always encounter is the issue of language barrier. The idea of always having to use a translator makes it very difficult to effectively communicate with my parents. There are day to day issues which occur and you may need to make a quick phone class home and the idea of always having to go through an interpreter is so cumbersome that sometimes I just avoid making some of the quick phone class that I would like to make.

# 4: Lack of parent involvement in the education of their children. It’s like these students are abandoned to the teacher who has to play multiple roles of mother, care giver, teacher, crisis counselor and all these many roles can be emotionally draining to the
teacher and time consuming. Again students whose parents are uninvolved often lack the motivation to learn.

# 3: Parents who think teachers are doing everything wrong. These parents do not hold their children accountable whereas they expect the teachers to work miracles.

# 1: One thing that I see most of the time is that these parents are overwhelmed and do not know what else to do to help their children so they have given up on their kids.

# 2: I think the problem is lack of education amongst the parents who often lack understanding of the characteristics of their child’s disability, some of the parents are dealing with the issue of denial and have not come to terms with the fact that their child has a disability. They also have no idea of strategies that they can implement to support their child. So I guess as teachers it is important that we have to support them in the process, share ideas in a non-threatening way that way we maybe lucky to reach them.

Moderator: # 5 do you have anything to add?

# 5: No

# 1: What gets me the most are those parents who even after being equipped with the knowledge do not try to carry over what is being done at school. Lack of consistency in the different settings makes it very difficult to work with such students.

Moderator: Anybody with something to add? On the flip side what are some of the rewarding aspects of your job?

# 5: To me the exciting thing is seeing the difference in the child’s life, just seeing them make progress academically or socially.

# 4: Parent satisfaction of the progress of their child. Another thing is students showing concern. At my school, I have this student who exhibits a lot of challenging behaviors, I
mean we are constantly dealing with one issue or the other throughout the school day. One time I was out sick and he kept asking about me and trying to find out how I was doing. I was out a few days and came back to work after mother’s day and his first statement to me was Happy Mothers Day and the whole day he did not want to get away from me, even at lunch time he volunteered to stay in and eat his lunch with me to make sure that I was fine.

# 2: Parents who advocate for their child. These parents will strive to find what is best for their child no matter what it takes.

Moderator: Could you clarify what you mean?

# 2: I mean those parents who strive and research to find what is best for their child. These parents will go to great lengths to find out information from teachers, service providers, medical personnel, internet, name it... they are always searching and seeking to find new information.

Moderator: What strategies can we put in place to ensure that we address the educational, social or emotional challenges that these students present?

# 2: Better transition services between mental health, juvenile justice and educational agencies.

# 1: Parent, teacher and professional education

# 3: I agree that we need to have parent classes; however, we cannot refer to them as parenting classes as this would turn off the parents. These sessions maybe referred to as training sessions or meetings to inform parents of services and equip them with skills.

# 4: Provision of safe places for students to go and calm down without them being
observed by peers. Students need to have a safe retreat where they can go after they loose control to spend time alone and regroup without feeling ashamed of their peers seeing them angry or crying or worse still making fun of them.

**Moderator: # 5 do you have anything to add?**

# 5: No, not really.

**Moderator: How do you perceive your pre-service preparation program in preparing you for your current position?**

# 3: I personally feel that classroom management and behavior management were well covered. My undergraduate degree was not in education so things like lesson planning and TEK alignment, I had to learn on the job. Some things that I feel were not addressed are things like gauging students feelings, teaching different disabilities, those I feel that I did not get.

# 2: I also got exposure to, was introduced to general differences in disabilities, but a lot of the stuff you learn on your own. I feel like the training we got from college basically addressed the theory but the rest of the things are more practical that you only learn them on the job.

# 1: Student teaching and classroom observations, hands on experience are the most important to me. Because we may learn as much theory as we wish to but we will not learn anything with regards to working with students with disabilities unless we get dirty, get hand on.

# 5: I liked the opportunities that I got when I was pursuing my masters in special education since we got to go to these classrooms and saw in real life what we were getting into.
Moderator: How about your preparation with regards to developing effective programs for students with E/BD.

# 3: I learnt pretty much by doing, no text books.

# 1: Beg, borrow or steal, do whatever you need to do. Incorporate ideas from other teachers.

# 4: Most teachers pretty much are on their own, the schools usually do not provide.

# 5: I took several courses during my masters, infact one of my professors provided opportunities where we simulated challenging student behaviors like in one case we simulated a scenario where my professor acted as a student having a meltdown and each of us was expected to take collect data on the ABC of the behavior, like how it started and progressed to the meltdown. Another scenario that I remember was my professor having a meltdown and we were to work with our student in this case my professor to help the student regain control and get back on track. Such simulations were not only fun but provided some useful insights on behavior management and the importance of having supports in place to address challenging behaviors.

Moderator: Anyone who wants to add anything? # 2?

# 2: Not really.

Moderator: We are nearing the end of our discussion. To conclude could anyone share some final thoughts on how we can help teachers to be more competent in working with students with E/BD.

# 5: Assistance from other teachers; competent teaching assistants who know their job.

# 4: Interesting, I also have major problems with my teaching assistants. Most of them are older than me and have been working for the district longer than me so they assume
that they know how to do things better than you as the teacher, and it is so hard for them to change. I also like the idea of having forums and open discussions like this where teachers can share their and exchange ideas. These maybe quite useful for new teachers to help them learn.

# 3: More courses on learning how to teach, I mean the art of teaching. Most of what we do is trial and error and I felt that we need more information on how to help these students to be more successful. I also like the idea of having experienced teachers as mentors to those who are still new to the field.

# 2: I would like to see more practice based programs in both undergraduate and graduate courses. We learn too much theory in our courses and there are not related to the reality of working with the students in the classrooms.

# 1: Yes, I agree with my colleague here, however, in addition to all that I would like to see more and better cohesion between administrators and teachers. I would also like to see more mentoring programs and practical hands on training that is ongoing practical in-service training for all new teachers as they begin their careers.

# 2: Oh I forgot, Documentation, Documentation, Documentation. These keep changing year by year and this is one aspect that is often overlooked. I think it is very important to offer training or very specific guidelines on how to present information i.e. IEP goals and objectives, so that there is some level of uniformity, consistency within our school districts or even within our state. It is amazing some of the paperwork we receive when new students move to our schools.

# 4: I agree it is important to have consistency in documentation throughout the state.

**Moderator:** Any suggestions for ongoing training, in service or professional
development?

# 1: I believe that it is important for all school personnel teachers and staff included should be trained on the issue of confidentiality.

# 3: I think that everyone should get some training on how to work with students with disabilities especially students with E/BD because most programs are currently focusing on reintegration and inclusion back into the general education setting. Once thing that is important to me is the issue of being sensitive to the needs of students with E/BD, I guess the word empathy is a better word to use. All teachers should undergo some form of sensitivity training to address the issue to being empathetic to students with E/BD and use of appropriate language when dealing with these students.

# 4: Techniques for dealing with day to day challenging situations that arise, more like collaboration.

# 2: Provide opportunity for novice teachers to observe the more skilled teachers in action.

# 1: Training on how to read and write IEP's and BIP's.

# 4: Modifications, you find that a lot of teachers do not modify student work because they do not know how to do it.

# 5: Behavior management skills for working with different students, like different disabilities and things like that.

# 3: Training on how to be better teachers. I like the workshops and continuing education offered by region XI, they usually share some very good ideas.

Moderator: Any suggestions for pre-service training? I mean the college preparation programs
# 5: I think college preparation in my opinion pretty much covers most of the
fundamentals that are required for any teacher.

# 1: Invite speakers to the classrooms to get help with behavior and/or classroom
management. # # 3: Teachers should do their homework, prepare and plan for class
and should always take the initiative to learn.

**Moderator:** Any further questions or comments?

Anyway if we do not have any further questions then we will end here. Thanks to all of
you for coming out this evening to participate in the focus group meeting. Your
contribution to the discussions and support for this research study are highly
appreciated. Thank you.
Venue: Denton Public Library Meeting Room

Date: May 31, 2007 at 7:00pm

In attendance:

# 1: I am number 1 and I teach at a self contained special education campus for students who have emotional disturbance and other mental health and behavioral issues. This is a K-12 campus and I teach all students social skills and do crisis intervention.

#2: I am number 2 and I teach in a middle school self contained setting, my students are ages 11 to 15. I have taught 5 years and I have only had one girl, so my students are 99% boys.

# 3: I am number 3 and I teach secondary high school resource special education and my content area is English.

# 4: I currently work as a school counselor in an elementary school campus. Before becoming a school counselor, I taught in a self contained setting for 4th and 5th grade students with E/BD in an upper elementary school for 4 years.

Moderator: Thanks for the introductions, we will go ahead and begin our discussions this afternoon. Why did you choose teach special education as a teaching career, and why specifically students with E/BD? For those who do not work in a self contained setting, I am sure you have a few students with E/BD who are included in your classroom, So for you I would like you to share why you chose special education as a teaching career?

# 2: ah, I actually never intended to teach at all. I did many other things before teaching, every woman in my family for generations were teachers. So after I divorced, I went
back to school got my teaching certificate and started to teach 6th grade history. After two years, I noticed there were a lot of kids who needed extra help and there wasn’t anybody to that or didn’t seem to be. So I went back to UNT, got my masters degree in E/BD and changed schools, they were opening up a new school and there was a SAC position open, so that kind of how I got started.

# 1: I guess the reason why I kind of got started in special education, was that originally I was not planning on teaching special education. However, when I was looking at things that I would like to teach, I guess I really wanted to work with kids that need the most help, you know and I have always been a calm and patient person, so I felt that was kind of where I was needed most. And when I started into it and I did my internship through my masters program, I just really like working with the kids, it was fun, it was exciting and it was different every day. I like being on my toes and not know exactly what was going to happen. I guess I would be bored if I was working in general education.

# 3: I took an undergraduate degree in education, planned to teach. After my undergraduate, I could not get a teaching job without coaching credentials. And a went back to graduate school, initially looked where the greatest need was and decided that special education was where the need was. Went back to graduate school in generic special education at North Texas and got hired on working for the school district and that’s where I have been for the last 34 years.

# 4: I currently work as a school counselor in an elementary school campus. I previously taught a self contained setting for 4th and 5th grade students with E/BD in an upper elementary school for 4 years. My classroom was initially meant for students with
learning disability, however, it turned out that most of my students had a primary coding was ED and were comorbid with LD. To answer the question, my undergraduate was in psychology and while I was waiting to start my masters in counseling, and I was substitute teaching at that time and I kept getting special education classes to substitute in. And I realized special education was a profession I wanted to get into, and I chose special education because I already had some experience as a substitute teacher and it complemented my background in psychology. I was at that time working with students with E/BD and during summer I was working with students with mild to severe MR. I was using a lot of behavioral techniques trying to get them to be more compliant or we were working on life skills with those who were severe MR. So I felt that it really complemented my background.

Moderator: Thank you, we move on to our next question. What conflicts do you encounter within your school community? And how do they impact your ability to effectively address the needs of your students?

# 3: I think the paperwork for me is very overwhelming, sometimes a a and lately to me it seems like I spend less and less time teaching and more and more time completing paperwork, writing IEP’S for ARD’s etcetera

# 2: That seems to be a major issue in special education. Both my mother and my grandmother taught special education and it is becoming more and more of an issue. It has changed a lot in past, they basically had a classroom of students and they didn’t really have more paperwork than we have today. At the end of the school year, I basically had twelve students and in six weeks I had 15 ARD’s. Which seems almost impossible and this means more paperwork, that many more IEP’s to do, BIP’s, I mean
it almost seems endless.

# 4: I experienced a lot of preconceived notions about what special education entailed and at that time I was working in a predominantly Hispanic community. There tends to be a lot of stereotypes, just traditional views on people with disabilities which make it very difficult to work with this specific population.

# 1: Some of the conflicts that I see are kind of we have staff that started the program, and they seem to want to do things their own way. They kind of got into the field because they started the school, and they get more and more negative because these are not the kind of kids they want to work with. The school morale goes down because we have some of these staff who do not want to work with these students.

# 3: Let me add something to that last question you had, what I have seen in the last 3 to 5 years is that coaches come in and they are hired for their coaching expertise, and then they pick a non-certified academic special education class either mathematics, science or English to balance out their teaching load but their concentration is really on the coaching and not on the special education content. My feeling is that students loose out in the process.

# 2: At my school part of that is and I keep hearing that you need to get your certification because we are going to have a lot of coaching positions/special education. And then they are coaching first and seventh period so they are squeezing in special education in between. And like he said the students get shorted in the process, I mean the coaches primary reason there is the coaching and not the teaching.

# 3: My understanding is that you can teach up to two classes beyond your level of credentialing without certification. And that’s really the biggest thing to then.
# 2: It probably is.

Moderator: How about conflicts with regards to the school climate?

# 2: My biggest problem is that I teach a self contained class and all my students have to come through my classroom first and earn the right to go back out in to the general population. And as they earn their class one by one going back into the general population, I have conflicts with general education teachers because this kid has been labeled ah ah.. that is a SAC student watch out for him or he may do this. I've had especially younger teachers call me and say what will I do if he tantrums, or what will I do if he falls down on the floor, what will I do if...... And I am going.... Well that’s really not going to happen, you know he is really just a student who has issues. But it’s really difficult for them to bring them into the classroom and not treat them like they are different from the other students. Especially if they have had them prior then they came to me then they went out again.

Moderator: Anyone wants to add something?

# 4: Ohm… I think professional awareness on the parts of other teachers, especially the general education teachers, because they themselves, this is not in a negative aspect, but most of them have preconceived notions of students with special education. They see the coding and instantly just have their own ideas of what the child is, they see the coding rather than the individual. And typically its good to have a coding because that is the way to communicate the needs of that child, unfortunately it is a label and teachers who have not had that experience, or those who took the one or two special education courses during their undergraduate, that is all they have to go with.

Moderator: How about conflicts with regards to working with families?
# 3: I have found over the years that I am basically not just teaching the students but in many cases I am teaching the parent also. And as I have said before in the ARD setting, the acronyms and educational terminology thrown about, and for the most part most average parents do not even have a clue what the acronyms and educational terminology means. So for the most part it’s an educational process not only for the student but for the family as well.

# 2: The majority of my kids come from very dysfunctional families; I mean it just goes hand in hand. I mean, I have the minority of the time compared to the parents. Normally Monday is a very rough day, they have been home all weekend, they have done what they wanted, probably did not get their meds. It’s that kind of thing, as old as they are, some are 15 year old, it’s hard to change that dynamic.

# 4: A lot of families did not see too much future for their children and I am talking about parents of people with mild to severe MR. So it was very difficult for parents to see parents to see that there was a future for this kids and the purpose of their education was not necessarily for compliance at home, but this was a chance for the child to be independent and to acquire the life skills they would need for the future for middle, high school and ultimately adult life. So a lot of the times it was just changing the parent’s views.

# 1: We have students who have been in special education for a while. Those parents come to ARD meetings, bring advocates with them and things like that, you know I mean, they know their legal boundaries, they know what the school has to do which is kind of good. And on the other end we have parents wont even come to the ARD meeting, and so you are trying to make home visits and try to get something that will
work for them, and that makes it a little tougher on the kinds.

# 2: I have had kids 3 years and I have never spoken to their parents, there is no communication whatsoever. That’s what they do. That child is 12 too bad.

**Moderator: So who signs the paperwork?**

# 2: Well, I have had a child come and register themselves in school. Drive themselves to school at 13 and we eventually have to let them into the school. We have only 2 choices (a) the child is not in school roaming the streets or (b) we let them enroll in school. Well it sounds bizarre but it’s true.

# 1: We have had diagnosticians go into the homes to have the parents sign the paperwork.

# 2: It’s true, some parents do not participate. They have nothing to do with that child.

# 3: We even do conference calls for ARD meetings.

# 2: Sure, and I have had again students for three years, they have never attended an ARD not one time, never ask what is happening, oh of course yes…. the paperwork is mailed to them, they never respond to telephone calls, they want no communication at all with the school. Infact if you call, they are going to duck it forever. Because a school call is always bad news, well according to what they learn as they see the child through school.

# 1: Again another problem, conflict is the community. At our campus we are kind of looked down upon because we have the troubled kids, so you know … its like, so you go to the challenge program, there is a stigma associated with students coming to our school or others working with our school. So that is yet another conflict that we have to deal with.
Moderator: Any other comments? How about conflicts with regards to the quality of programs offered?

# 1: I think at our campus, the problem may not necessarily apply to other regular campuses; we get a lot of first year teachers who are alternatively certified. They do not have the education background; a lot of them go through the alternative certification just to get in but they do not have the background knowledge of the TEKS or everything they need to teach the students.

# 2: I think it is a rude awakening if you go into a classroom with no knowledge what so ever of classroom management even a general education classroom, and worse still if you go into a special education classroom without any classroom management, it is chaos. I mean, they do not know what to do. As far as teaching a subject, they are never going to teach a single thing, all they are going to do is to try to get the kids to try to sit down and behave. And they are really not going to know what to do if they do not have what she is talking about; they do not have the education.

Moderator: Anything else before we move on? We have dwelt so much on the conflicts, what are some of the most rewarding aspects of your job?

# 4: For me I think it was the change in the family system that brought the satisfaction. After a while the parents did realize that after all their child can learn, their child can do all these things. They started advocating for their kids, every time we came to ARD’s they became more open to trying all the different things that were proposed, they were simply not content any longer with their child being in the same special setting, in one classroom the whole day. At that time we were beginning inclusion and the parents were more for it, more supportive of their children and the process. Those to me were
some of my most rewarding aspects of my job.

# 1: For my campus it is seeing the kids get back to their regular campus. That’s a reward, they have mastered their social skills and they fell comfortable where they can go back to their regular campus. Well it’s also rewarding to see the daily progress where we see them start sharing, and start being polite to the other kids, where before they were constantly arguing with other kids. So we see the daily rewards as well.

# 2: Sometimes, it is so small that other people would not notice it. Well I mean I can see a world of difference in that child from August through December whereas other people may say you mean he was worse? Well I mean and I say he did stand in the corner and scream and wail in the wall for three solid hours and now he can talk himself down and we are done in 10 minutes and we are ready to move on, well it’s huge. Well I have never had any student graduate because I am in middle school, but I get reports back from my kids about how they are doing in high school and I am always thrilled. Well I had a student in my program for three years, and he had been in elementary school, so that is 6 years of self contained SAC and he got out before he went # 3: Of course the greatest rewards for me being in the business as long as I have is seeing them after they graduate from school, being in a productive, God fearing, tax paying, law abiding part of the society.

# 2: Well that’s a regular person.

# 3: Well that to me is the application beyond the classroom, application to reality.

# 2: Well we know, we have to admit that most of our kids are not going to go to college, well let’s be real. There is a 15% chance that my students will graduate from high school and to see them being productive citizens. To find out that they are working
somewhere being a regular person and surviving in the society, that’s what we would like to see.

**Moderator:** What are some strategies that we can put in place to ensure that we address the educational, social and emotional challenges that these students present.

**# 4:** I think to me establishing that rapport with the parents, bringing them on from the very beginning, not necessarily as a teacher but in the condition of humanity, basically one person to another, one person showing unconditional positive support for the family regardless of what their background is. Whether they are educated or not as educated, regardless of their socio-economic status, I think that partnership is crucial because once that is established, things just happen, so much more quickly.

**# 2:** Again with some of my kids, some of them it is teaching them, giving them the knowledge. They came into your room clueless; they really honestly do not know what is appropriate. They may say that it is ok to say that at my home; well my dad says that every five minutes. Well he does that and I have been told to stand up for myself; they say that if somebody stands in my face I am supposed to shove them. And we go well we have zero tolerance here, you are going to go in handcuffs to jail. They have to learn that society as a whole doesn’t accept that. Well Dad being what dad is he thinks that is the only way you deal with problems. You know they come in and see a different side of things, which you know they still have to go back home and cope with the situation, like dad saying things like oh well you are a sissy because you were shoved and you did not shove back. You know they do learn things that they have never learnt before.

**# 1:** I think positive reinforcement is important, teaching social skills to them in the
moment it happens, using those teachable moments to teach them as they go the skills that they lack.

# 3: That goes back to educating the family. After being in education this long, I get second generation kids, I had their parents as my students and to see their offspring back in high school, in my classes is aaa..... well my dad said that you used to say the same thing when he was here, and I say, yes I did.

# 2: Well I hope you are not surprised to see their kids in your classroom.

# 3: It's the same cycle; it keeps going on and on. And one thing I must say is that hopefully it will not be there for the grand kids. But I see less deviation from second generation than I saw with the parents.

# 2: Yes, you know that at least they learnt something.

# 3: Well that tells me that at some point somebody if getting through it from a second generation, they may have some reading issues or some comprehension issues, etcetera. But as far as the overall characteristics that landed them into special education or behavior classroom in the first place I see less and less of those.

# 2: Well we all know that they can pass the core classes with some help, it's the things that stand in the way of that that is the problem.

# 3: Probably one of the biggest rewards for me is to see them make progress and are ready to go into the regular classroom and then they hate it. Well in the ARD I tell them that I am sorry, well my recommendation is that you go into the regular English classroom so long as I choose the teacher. Well on my campus there are teachers on my campus who work well with us and there are others who don't. So I tell them that if I can choose the teacher who will work well with them and that teacher will accommodate
their learning style as well as some ideas of what works well and then implement that in the classroom. And my thing is that they are not necessarily on the honor roll but they are not back in special education either. They are struggling to survive just to earn what the other kids earn.

#2: Well some people ask in my room well what do you teach; well they have this vision that I have this room with bars on the window, and it is this horrible prison. Well I tell the parents that we are going to get this behavior tantrum under control first. We can’t teach anything else unless we do that. That is not possible; there is no way to do that. And they finally understand that the kid, that can’t sit on his seat, is obviously not going to learn any math until he finally sits on his seat, and then we can finally start teaching. So that’s a strategy to me the first thing you are working on is the behavior.

#1: Right, I think also showing the kids that somebody cares. Because a lot of the times we know that some of the kids have very caring parents and others don’t. I think just showing them that no matter what they do, you are still going to care about them. They can’t do anything to turn you away from them. They know that you are always going to care.

#2: And the next day is a new day, most kids are not going to believe that. Parents can always see that fast, but for the kids it takes a long time before they can believe that. For the kids just knowing that if they go bonkers or even if they assault you, oh well, then the next day is a new day. You start with 100 on your behavior sheet and you know.

#1: Well you are showing them respect. If they see that you are going to respect them, they are more likely to respect you.
# 3: Well that’s right. It’s hard to imagine that in some cases we care way more than their parents. We bandage them; make sure they get to the doctors; we do all kinds of things that I never thought possible. We wear so many different hats, like if we find out that a kid needs supplies, you know…. Probably, well everything that they need. Well I know about my kids more than probably any other teacher ever does, really really minute details.

Moderator: Any other comments, well we will move on. How do you perceive your pre-service teacher preparation program in preparing you for your current position?

# 2: Well mine was great. I mean I did not have special education courses, probably only one class undergraduate, but in graduate school having a degree in special education (specifically E/BD) it totally prepared me. You know I did internship in children’s medical center in the psychiatric ward and then Texas Youth Commission, it totally prepared me.

# 1: I also feel the internship is what prepared me the most. The classes prepared me with how to make BIP’s and to do stuff like that. I think actually getting out there and seeing what it is like to be out there and as an intern, you probably get to work with the kids a little bit, but you also get to observe the teacher a lot. You can see the strategies that work and what does not work for each teacher, so you are learning strategies during this internship that will help you once you get out and start your teaching.

# 4: My personal background was excellent. I went through the alternative certification through the University of Texas at El-Paso and my preparation was intensive, it was more intensive than what the region was offering. I got all the genuine education
courses I needed to do all this. The mentoring was excellent, I had a mentor who was very experienced, had a Masters in special education and was right there on campus with me. So I was very prepared, had the best support that I could have ever needed.

# 3: For me I graduated from school a long time ago, precisely 1976. I got the credentials to teach from the university, but I learnt to teach when I got into the classroom. The kids taught me how to teach, I did not learn how to teach from the college classroom. College taught me how to do the ARDS, BIPS, characteristics of my students but the things that go with being a successful teacher, I learnt from the kids. I feel that probably during my first year to teach, the kids lost out. But that second year I got better and they learnt something.

# 2: Well they can’t teach you how to be prepared for any of the things that will happen in the classroom.

# 3: Yes the academics I had, the ability to communicate to teach, the kids taught me and have continued to teach me, even after these many years.

Moderator: My next question will be more specific to a self contained setting. How do you handle teaching academic content especially if the kid is with you the whole day?

# 2: That’s pretty tough; I teach six different classes for three different grade levels. Tough, so I hear a teacher complain about one prep and I have eighteen, you know. I don’t teach the same subject everyday, I usually try to teach math everyday, maybe history 3 times a week, science maybe 3 days a week, there is no possible way to deal with it. Not with a 3 hour melt down, I mean, you know all the other stuff that is thrown in, a fire drill. The core classes are very basic in my room; the point is to get everybody
in the middle, to get through the lesson without any melt down, breakdown, flare-ups or conflicts between the students. And then once they start learning that is supposed to be the focus, no its not that Johnny poked his finger at you, or you know whatever happened in that hour, your focus was to do chapter 10, so the academics are pretty basic.

**# 1:** Fortunately in our program we have a lot of staff, so if someone has a melt down, someone else will leave the room with them, so in this case this year it is me, last year I taught class all day so someone else would leave the room with them. Then they will teach them what they should have done differently, work with them until they regain control and are ready to come back to class to continue with the academics. You just keep on going, it takes a lot of time, and while it is happening sometimes you may have to move students out if they are too difficult to move. But generally it usually will not take more than 15 minutes for a student to choose to leave, one their audience is gone it does not take too long to calm them down. I think it is kind of difficult, you know last year in our intermediate classroom, I had 3rd through 8th grade in one classroom, and there are so many different subjects in there to work on, you have the older ones trying to bully the little ones, you have all the different challenges and so many things to work on. It is tough, but there is a way to work it and the kids know what to expect. And luckily we have, our ratios are quite low, we have 6 students to one teacher and one aide. We can split them into group’s one works with the teacher and the other works with the aide or you can teach the broad concept and then differentiate their activities.

**Moderator:** How about number 3, I assume you have not been teaching English all throughout your career...
# 3: I have also taught social studies and science, but that was when I taught middle school.

**Moderator:** So my question is, how did your college preparation prepare you to teach content?

# 4: My program trained me to teach reading and mathematics, science and social studies at that time I think at that time there was not emphasis.

# 3: In my case as far as teaching academics is concerned, my program did not have any courses that specifically addressed teaching English, or social studies or science, other than just introductory level courses teaching elementary mathematics, social studies.

**Moderator:** So basically all these things you are teaching you have learnt on your own?

# 3: Yes I had to learn them along the way.

# 2: Even though I have not had my degree for long, I graduated in 1998 and I had all these classes that taught you how to teach English, or taught you how to teach….

Hmmm… they did not do much to me.

# 3: I would say some of them were required courses for me to get the degree, but as far as preparing me to teach, I don’t think that they did much.

# 2: Well…. They did not do much to me, well it really did not do much. In a reading class that I did, we did at the reading lab in UNT and we actually had little reading students, but as far as the other classes were concerned, all we did was to sit there and prepare lesson plans; well you know we did not do anything.

# 1: As for me I think all it did was to teach me some strategies, and how to approach
teaching, and when you get out there that is when you actually learn how to teach.

# 2: I was hired in a new middle school to start a SAC classroom and all they did was to
give me a key, there is your classroom. So I literally had to set up a new classroom.

# 3: All I got was a box of chalk, and here is the key to your classroom and have a
happy year. I had no text books….

# 2: Look, ha ha ha........, you do not need any text books. You are generally not given a
whole lot; you are just supposed to go with it.

# 3: Well that’s what it is, well I spent a lot of time at the college library after I graduated
trying to find something appropriate academically as far as social studies in concerned.

# 2: Well I don’t use text books most of the time, obviously I have a room full of text
books and I probably use them only 30% of the time. You never really need them, and
now with the internet, there is so much and you can do research and come out with
great ideas

# 1: Many times they are not even at their reading levels.

**Moderator:** What would be some possible suggestions for in-service that would
address your needs in your specific setting?

# 2: Regular education teachers need to understand and learn to work with special
education students. Well, they may have teams that have 180 students and 40 of them
maybe special education. They need to know more about them and not be afraid to
work with them

**Moderator:** So what specific topics or issues would you suggest for them?

# 4: I always advocate for this but I think special education in-services need to be for
everyone. The way I have seen it in the districts that I have worked in, it’s only the
special education personnel who get these special education in-services while the general education teachers get the math, science, social studies and the special education teachers who teach those subjects need to be in those in-services as well. So there needs to be a diffusion of the departments as far as in-services are concerned.

**# 1:** I think positive behavioral supports should be one of them, I think it is necessity now in any setting whether you are in a general education setting or self contained setting, I think that would be a great topic.

**# 2:** I think they also need to learn how to make them a part of the class, to include them in everything you are doing and not give them a separate modified test and put them there in the corner, or what I see put them out in the hallway, you know……alone…. without the instruction. They are alone, they are separate, they have been labeled, and they need to learn that Johnny Doe here may have been labeled, he needs a little bit of this but he can still work with this group over here with the other kids.

**Moderator: Any others?**

**# 3:** I am still thinking.

**# 2:** As you were saying that you have to select teachers whom you transition your students to because some of them have never accepted out students and never will.

**# 3:** And probably that would be a good thing, maybe an in-service on inclusion, the ramifications of it and what is expected of the general education teachers.

**# 2:** We have a couple of them who do not welcome them and I do not want that child having to endure that situation. Oh no… that is the last thing they want, it’s that negativity.

**# 3:** They will not say anything to them. It’s all that non-verbal stuff, the look, always
expecting that they are going to do something wrong, it’s that phobia, special education phobia.

# 1: One of the best trainings I have had is the life space crisis intervention training, I would recommend that.

Moderator: Any final thoughts, any suggestions on how we can transform the pre-service programs to prepare teachers who are competent and ready to address the students needs better.

# 4: I think once again it boils down to appropriate mentorship and I think that there needs to be a mentor who is capable for working with all students and has the attitude that all students are guaranteed the right to learn regardless of their disability whether they are emotionally disabled, learning disabled or whatever the case happens to be. And that mentor has to have that ingrained in them so that as new teachers come in and they are working with them, that it is passed on. It needs to be foundational. And I think that will perpetuating positive culture promoting acceptance of all children not just general or special education or students with low SES, it’s an all encompassing culture.

# 3: I think one of the things that need to be done is the early exposure to the students. One of the problems over the years is that by the time a would be teacher enters the classroom; they have had 2 or 3 years of college behind them. Lots of money, lots of time and the mindset is that I have invested too much money, too much time to get out of it, but I think an earlier experience maybe even at the freshman level or a mandatory internship where they are expected to work with special education students in the SAC environment or a straight academic environment.

# 2: I think that’s good, don’t go all the way through and then get horrified when this
child does something. You need to be prepared. One of the biggest things that people
do not seem to get is that every student is different. I have to remember that Johnny
can’t stand a CD playing on the recorder and then we expect him to do the math
problems. A teacher will come to me, well what is wrong with so and so, and I will be
like …. Well him mother was drunk last night, it was a Sunday night and it always
happens every Sunday so on Monday we have to play it low keyed. I mean those kinds
of things is that all these children are different, you cannot just lump them together as a
team.

Moderator: Would you recommend the early internships for all special education
teachers or even the general education teachers included?

# 3: Yes, I think if they go in on a degree plan for education, then they need to start
being in a classroom as soon much earlier that they are.

# 2: Listen, we had to take 1 special education class during my undergraduate and it
was bland… nothing, did not tell me anything. The requirement was 1 class of special
education, and it was basically just to get us by.

# 3: A lot of things we learn in special education would be beneficial in any classroom. If
teachers could use these strategies especially classroom management, we would be so
much successful. One thing going back on the issue of in-service, I am really big on the
issue of mentoring. I think new teachers who are handed a box of chalk and keys and
told have a happy year we will see you in 187 days, they are at a loss. But it would be a
good idea if they could be paired with a veteran teacher who can tell them - do not
worry about this, I will show you a different way to do it. The paperwork especially in
special education can be overwhelming, it can be very intimidating. And you come up to
the last 3 or 4 days of school and you have got 14 checklists and they all have to be
signed off on before you can go and the new teachers is looking at it going, no one told
me about this prior to this date, it is very overwhelming.

# 4: Texas Behavior Support Initiative – PBS with proactive classroom management
techniques that are preventative in nature and most are just common sense things that
are easy to implement.

**Moderator:** Any further comments? Thank you all for sparing time out of your busy
schedule to participate in this focus group. Your contribution to the discussions and
support for this research study are highly appreciated. Thank you.
REFERENCES


