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**IMPLICATIONS OF TEACHER BURNOUT RELATED TO BEING
A SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVIDER**

**A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY**

**BY
BILL SPROULS**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

AUGUST 2023

**IMPLICATIONS OF TEACHER BURNOUT RELATED TO BEING
A SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVIDER**

BY

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APPROVED

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AUGUST 2023

ABSTRACT

The profession of special education instructor has evolved over the years. Special education teachers must often manage lesson plans that make accommodations for all intellectual and disability needs of students. Special education teachers are charged with leading the IEP team and overseeing a wide range of goals, including occupational, speech, physical, and emotional behavioral, and modified education that integrates the student into the least restrictive environment mandated by law. These responsibilities often vary across disabilities and federal educational settings. The author of this thesis reviewed a number of relevant articles that explored the multitude of responsibilities required of special education teachers as it relates to burnout and retention rates in the field. The purpose of this thesis is to explore best practices to support special education professionals to prevent professional burnout and increase the retention of teachers in the profession.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Definitions and Focus of Thesis

The focus of this thesis is teacher burnout and retention in the field of special education, hereafter may be referred to as special education or by its acronym of SPED. To further understand the topic, it is this paper's intent to define and apply the definitions of terms to the world of special education as they relate to teacher burnout and retention. It is the purpose of the definitions to elaborate on settings, disabilities, due process, and legislation that may contribute to the occurrence of special education teacher burnout.

Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)- IDEA is a law that makes available free appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities throughout the United States and ensures special education and related services to those children. The IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services. As of the 2020-21 school year, more than 7.5 million children ages birth to 21 were eligible to receive special education services under the IDEA ("About IDEA," 2022).

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)- "Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance, including federal funds. Section 504 provides that: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." It should also be noted that the law defines appropriate as: "An appropriate education may comprise education in regular classes, education in regular classes with the use of related aids and services, or special education and related services in separate classrooms for all or portions of the school

day. Special education may include specially designed instruction in classrooms, at home, or in private or public institutions and may be accompanied by related services such as speech therapy, occupational and physical therapy, psychological counseling, and medical diagnostic services necessary to the child's education" ("Free appropriate public education under section 504," 2010).

Special Education- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004 Sec 300.39 defines special education as specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including speech and language therapy, occupational, vocational, and adaptive physical education. These are to be provided under a Free and Appropriate Public Education, or FAPE IDEA (2004).

Federal Settings- The federal settings for special education are determined by how much of the educational day the student attends a special education classroom, 0-21 percent in special education defines Federal Setting I. In this setting, the student may receive pull-out services for goals and disabilities and spends most of their day in mainstream or general education settings. Federal Setting II is determined by the student receiving services in a special education setting from 21-60 percent of their educational day. This setting would have increased pull-out services that may include separate physical education, and other subjects taught 1:1 in the special education classroom to address goals. Individual disabilities and behaviors drive the federal setting. Setting III is defined by the student requiring services for 60 percent or more in the special education classroom. Setting IV is a separate secure location. In this setting, behaviors are too intrusive for a mainstream setting. The goal of Setting IV facilities is to manage and dissipate behaviors in order to transition to a setting III. Federal Setting V is the least common in

public education and is defined as taking place in a public hospital, day treatment, correctional facility, etc. ("Special education," n.d.).

There are thirteen disability categories that are defined by the Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act or IDEA that are served through special education. This paper will focus mainly on the disabilities listed below, as they are the most common in public school settings. The following are most attributed to behaviors, specifically Emotional Behavioral and Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)- Specific Learning Disability or SLD covers learning challenges that affect a student's ability to read, write, listen and comprehend, reasoning skills, and math skills. Disability examples covered under this category include Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, and the written expression disorder often referred to as Dysgraphia ("IDEA disability categories," 2019).

Other Health Impairment - known as Other Health Disability (OHD)- The OHD disability category as defined by IDEA as "Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment." The disability can be caused by any acute health problems that limit the students' academic experience, for example, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder ("13 categories of disability under IDEA law," 2017).

Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD)- For students to meet the criteria and receive special education services in Minnesota under the disability category of Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD), students must demonstrate behavioral consistency by having an established pattern of one or more of the following emotional or behavioral responses: A. withdrawal or anxiety, depression, problems with mood, or feelings of self-worth; B. disordered thought

processes with unusual behavior patterns and atypical communication styles; or C. aggression, hyperactivity, or impulsivity. The established pattern of emotional or behavioral responses must adversely affect educational or developmental performance, including intrapersonal, academic, vocational, or social skills; be significantly different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms; and be more than temporary, expected responses to stressful events in the environment. The emotional or behavioral responses must be consistently exhibited in at least three different settings, two of which must be educational settings and one other setting in either the home, childcare, or community. The responses must not be primarily the result of intellectual, sensory, or acute or chronic physical health conditions ("Emotional or behavioral disorders," n.d.).

Autism Spectrum Disorders ASD- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects how an individual processes information and interprets the world. Core features of autism are persistent deficits in social interaction and communication; and restricted, repetitive or stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. Everyone with ASD displays a unique combination of characteristics, ranging from mild to severe, requiring individually determined educational and treatment programming. The first signs of autism appear in early childhood and can be detected by an experienced professional as early as 18 to 24 months of age. Early and accurate identification and intervention can change the trajectory for many children on the autism spectrum ("autism spectrum disorders," n.d.).

Developmental Cognitive Disabilities (DCD)- Developmental Cognitive Disability is defined as a condition that results in intellectual functioning significantly below average and is associated with concurrent deficits in adaptive behavior that require special education and related services ("Developmental cognitive disabilities," n.d.).

Burnout- Webster defines burnout as exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation, usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration. ("Definition of burnout," 2022). Professionally, burnout may be defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who work with people in some way. The key aspect of burnout syndrome is increased feelings of emotional exhaustion (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). A model was developed specifically for teachers suggesting that burnout results from the interaction among task qualities (e.g., work demands), social support (e.g., collegial support), organizational characteristics (e.g., school culture), teachers' personal qualities (e.g., personality, motivation), and political and economic context (e.g., societal values, federal laws). Burnout, in turn, is posited to have negative and harmful effects on teacher behavior, which results in negative student perceptions and behavior and, ultimately, poor student outcomes (Maslach & Leiter, 1999, pp. 295-303).

The Author's personal experiences

The author's personal experiences with a child with autism spectrum disorder directly led to his mid-life career change, pivoting from the business sector to education as a teacher licensed in the area of autism spectrum disorders. The writer's experiences with his son provided him with valuable perspectives from the parental side of the education of a child with special needs or disabilities. The 18-year journey for father and son was often a struggle. Through his experience as a parent, the author of this text realized that his child's case managers were most effective in getting positive results when they established a relationship with him as a valuable member of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team. In 2015 the writer of this thesis made the decision to return to school and get his license in special education instruction. He would soon realize that special education teachers were in high demand across many settings and disabilities.

The first teaching position the writer accepted was at an intermediate school district in a transition-age program. One month into his career, it became apparent that in the 18-21 transition age program there was little curriculum to support the program, and it was up to instructors to find and request curriculum from the district. The teachers in the program often found material on the internet and pieced instruction together. This often made for a lack of standard curriculum or means to track progress. The author was transferred to a Federal Setting 3 program in an elementary school only a month into his career, all during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first year of teaching was a challenge for the author; he fell behind in the due process requirements and curriculum development and unsupported due to a lack of training due in large part to the pandemic. By the end of his first full year as a special education teacher, he was notified that his class was being moved to a new classroom in a different school in the partner district.

The second year, in his third setting, presented more challenges as he worked with new students with behaviors. One student physically attacked another, another returned from vacation with a questionable self-inflicted injury to his wrist, and staffing was unreliable and often tried to undermine his management of the classroom. Teachers, like everyone else, have life opportunities to present themselves that change career trajectories. Record housing values prompted the author and his partner to sell their home to maximize value. The sale prompted a move to another community and an offer to accept a position in a community close to the family's new home. The author put in his resignation one day after his contractual deadline; realizing this, he contacted his supervisor, who informed him that once his position was filled, he would be allowed to leave. The position was filled. However, due to staff shortages, his release was not granted, and instead, he would be moved to another school location in one of the district's partner schools. The district also contacted the author's future district to notify them he would not be let out of his contract. The author felt spited, unsupported, and in the dark as subsequent inquiries to the district hierarchy as well as the school board, were not answered. The writer of this thesis felt that after his 3rd year, he would be let go and not offered tenure, so he found another position with a district that accepted "breaking" his contract under the circumstances.

The writer's new position has illuminated still more factors contributing to teacher burnout in special education. In his prior position, the students the writer was case managing were transitioning from a Federal Setting IV down to a Setting III. These students had worked on their behaviors and improved, warranting the change in setting. In his current position, students have more violent behaviors and are in Federal Setting II and III, ramping up to a Federal Setting IV. The writer's current setting was also understaffed and unsafe; at times, the writer found

himself alone with four students in the classroom. There have been objects thrown, hitting, kicking, and eloping from the classroom. One student has been kicked in the mouth by another drawing blood, and this author has been hit in the nose by a notebook thrown by a student. The teacher has also been informed by the same student that he would kill him; the student is only a first grader. The author, in his 4th different classroom in less than three years, does not intend to stay in his current position. From informal conversations with other teachers, it has become apparent to the writer that his experiences, as extreme as they may seem, are not isolated to him and may, in fact, be quite common to the industry.

The author of this work gained valuable experience throughout all three years he has been teaching. The author has established rewarding relationships in each of his classrooms that have led to student achievement. The writer is looking forward to his new position in his home city, which will be his 4th different classroom in as many years of teaching. Depersonalization, one of the three factors leading to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1999), has been the biggest factor for the author's instability in his quest to find a fit professionally.

The personal experiences of this writer have inspired him to complete this thesis. It is the goal of this work to show how a multitude of factors contribute to teacher burnout in special education. The thesis will show that teacher burnout in special education is prevalent and will identify the following factors as antecedents to burnout:

- Lack of administrative support
- School culture
- Lack of training
- Staffing shortages (teacher retention)
- Student behaviors

All these factors are contributing to unhealthy teacher and student environments. Special education students often have the potential for aggressive and sometimes violent behaviors, increasing potential injury and property damage. Teachers fear mostly for their students' safety, with secondary concerns for personal safety and the possibility of jeopardizing their educational licensure and professional careers. The decades-long nationwide shortage of special education teachers and support staff contributes to heightened stress and potential burnout in educators of students with disabilities.

Purpose of Thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to explore research in the work environments and the school and district cultures of special education teachers who work with students with disabilities.

Thesis Question:

The question this thesis asks is: What are the dominant factors leading to the burnout of special education teachers, and how does burnout impact the quality of education and services provided to special education students?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Process

The primary research process of this author was to identify published scholarly articles through Bethel Library Lib search that specifically addressed teacher burnout as related to the field of special education. Greater attention was given to those articles that focused on training and supporting teachers, administrative support, school culture, student behaviors, due process (paperwork), and stress leading to special education teacher burnout. Once the author was able to identify recent studies that dealt specifically with the contributing factors of special educator burnout, this writer researched the references of the articles and found other scholarly articles that were relevant to the research. Finally, this researcher was able to identify specific authors and research teams that have written multiple articles on the subject. Once there were 40 articles available, the articles were reviewed and narrowed down to the 14 most relevant.

Maslach Burnout Inventory 1981

Upon conducting this review, the author found nearly all the works of previous authors and studies referenced The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The Maslach Burnout Inventory is an assessment of the levels of burnout scale that utilizes a 22-item questionnaire to determine individual levels of burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is widely used as a data set for many of the articles reviewed in this paper. The full battery of the assessment is not allowed for publication in this work; however, an overview of the methodology and results of the thesis author's personal assessment are provided.

The MBI-ES (educator survey) results will be referenced throughout this paper as a measure to track teacher burnout. The three types of feelings comprising burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1981). The

results of the survey are determined using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0, equaling “Never,” to 6, equaling a response of “Every day.” The respondents' answers are then tallied by adding select answers by criteria to provide a score in the three areas of burnout. The higher the score in each category, the greater the level of burnout.

The results of the MBI-ES are compared with average scores that have been recorded and documented by licensed test administrators. The average scores for the three categories are as follows: Emotional Exhaustion: 21.25, Depersonalization: 11, and Personal Achievement 34. The MBI-ES assessment is designed to allow administration ranging from the district level, administrative level, small groups, and individual subjects that work in the education profession. For personal reference, the author conducted an individual self-assessment and scored higher, or at greater risk, in Emotional Exhaustion with a tally of 37, and in Depersonalization, 23. In the area of Personal Achievement, the writer had a score of 29. The MBI is frequently referenced in the literature reviewed in this document and is utilized in many fields, including the relevant topic as related to teacher burnout in special education.

Predicting Special Educator Intent to Continue Teaching.

Bettini et al. (2020) explored the difficulty of retaining teachers to serve students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in self-contained settings, as they have higher rates of burnout and attrition than other educators. The purpose of the investigation was to examine special educators' working conditions in self-contained settings for students with EBD and how they contributed to teacher levels of emotional exhaustion and stress, and their intent to stay in teaching. The body of their research was developed primarily through scholarly articles and a survey driven by the conceptual foundation of the conservation of resources theory, which is the concept that when the demands and resources are balanced, employees, or in this case, teachers,

feel that they can manage workloads and experience positive outcomes. When demands exceed the allocated resources, teachers experience stress and emotional exhaustion, leading to teachers leaving the profession. Thus, the level of workload manageability is the driving factor in the relationship between demands and affective responses to work (Alacorn, 2011, as cited in Bettini et al., 2020, p. 210).

In their study, their work highlighted the intent of teachers continuing to teach in self-contained classrooms of EBD students and how the following hypothesis would impact the results: (1) Resources and demands will predict workload manageability such that special educators feel that workloads are more manageable when they have more resources and fewer demands. (2) Workload manageability will mediate relationships between resources/demands and affective outcomes such that teachers who experience fewer resources and more demands will perceive workloads as less manageable and therefore experience higher emotional exhaustion and stress. (3) Emotional exhaustion and stress will mediate a relationship between workload manageability and intent to stay such that teachers who rate workloads less manageable will experience more emotional exhaustion and stress and therefore be more likely to intend to leave. (4) Administrative support will predict intent to stay, both directly and indirectly (i.e., its effects will be partially mediated by relationships with other resources and demands (Bettini et al., 2020, p. 212).

However, before the four hypotheses of the survey could be implemented, the researchers had to determine the method and the sampling teacher population. The survey was developed using items from existing surveys and scales, mainly the Schools and Staffing Survey: National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012; Michigan Indiana Early Career Teacher Study: which demonstrated a strong model fit for reliability in prior studies. Those surveyed consisted

of 25 randomly selected districts consisting of very large, large, medium, and small populations. The survey consisted of 235 replies, of which most identified as female (72.37%) and White/Caucasian (72.00%); 10.00% identified as Black or African American, 1.33% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 11.33% as Hispanic or Latinx, 4.67% as two or more races, and 0.67% as other. Most of the survey sample (61.04%) had a degree in special education or a teaching certificate (72.73%), with an average of 12.74 years of experience. 83.35% taught in self-contained special education settings, with an average of 8.73 students, of whom 8.11 received special education services for EBD (Bettini et al., 2020, p. 213).

The survey measured responses from items directly related to the hypotheses. Included were items measuring intent to stay, workload manageability, affective outcomes (i.e., stress, emotional exhaustion), and working conditions (i.e., social resources, logistical resources, demands) (Bettini et al., 2020, p. 213).

The survey results were then compared to the 4 hypotheses. (1) Results supported that demands and resources predict workload manageability. The findings regarding curricular resources and planning time aligned with prior research findings that these conditions shape teacher experiences in working with students with EBD. (2) Workload manageability as a mediator. The survey results revealed that workload manageability explained relationships between working conditions and demands related to burnout. The conclusion aligned with the conservation of resources theory; low resources and high demand equal burnout. (3) Emotional exhaustion and stress as mediators. The findings of the survey were consistent with prior research explaining that the relationship between workload manageability and intent is affected by emotional exhaustion. (4) Administrative support as a predictor. The findings supported that administrative support was an important component of a teacher's intent to stay. Support or lack

thereof was also found by the survey to predict ratings of curricular resources, training, school culture, and workload manageability (Bettini et al., 2020, p. 224).

The article concluded that students with EBD are at greater risk for poor educational outcomes than students with other disabilities (Bettini et al., 2020, p. 226). The conclusions further indicated that the risk for EBD students is directly related to the working conditions of the teachers that serve them. The findings implored districts to provide interventions for the students and reduce the demand for resources put upon educators (Bettini et al., 2020, p. 225).

Defining Administrative Support

The continuing need for special education teachers illuminates the problem of teacher shortages. Teacher shortages in special education can be directly attributable to teachers' intent to stay or leave the profession. This attrition cannot only be attributable to the retirement of special educators, as one-third of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years in the field (Dillon, 2007, as cited in Cancio et al., 2013, p. 72). Cancio et al. (2013) conducted a study to identify the perceptions of current teachers of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) and the quantity and importance of administrative support in identifying factors affecting teacher longevity in the field of special education (Cancio et al., 2013, p. 71).

Cancio and colleagues sent the survey by email to all of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorder (CCBD) during the 2009-2010 school year. The survey directed members only to fill out the survey if they were currently teaching in an EBD setting. The participants of the study included 408 teachers of students with EBD, 80 male and 328 female, with 391 or 95.8% indicating that they were endorsed or licensed in the area in which they currently taught (Cancio et al., 2013, p. 71). The survey was constructed of 96 items in six clusters. The clusters gathered teacher information from their work setting: (1) extent of admin support, (2) job

satisfaction, (3) feelings experienced on/from the job, (4) views about the school, (5) self-descriptive statements, and (6) demographic information. The survey was developed from three sources. First, survey questions were adopted from a study conducted by Littrell et al. (1994) on the effects of principal support on special and general educators' stress, job satisfaction, school commitment, health, and intent to stay in teaching. Second, items were developed by a literature study to determine contributors to stress, burnout, and the attrition of teachers of students with EBD. Third, items offered from the experiences of the investigators on stressors associated with teaching in the EBD area were considered (Cancio et al., 2013, p. 75).

The study findings revealed that of the 408 participants, 13 planned to leave the profession "Definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as I can," 57 stated that they "Will probably continue until something better comes along," 49 until early retirement, 194 until normal retirement, and 95 until forced to retire (Cancio et al., 2013, p. 81). These rates suggested a higher rate of satisfaction than suggested; however, it is important to note that only 37 of those surveyed were in the critical first three years of teaching, which are crucial to intent to stay in the profession (Cancio et al., 2013, p.76). In addition, respondents to the health questions of the survey showed that 60% of respondents reported feeling tired frequently, and 31% also reported they did not sleep well (Cancio et al., 2013, p.81). The data collected revealed that the most relevant variable for job satisfaction appeared to be the extent of support for guidance and feedback, followed by opportunities for growth (Cancio et al., 2013, p. 81).

The research team concluded that administrative support is vital to teachers serving students with EBD; there may be a variety of reasons that administrators are unable to implement interventions needed for support. Many administrators become so occupied with the daily minutiae of their responsibilities that they cannot look at the big picture and acknowledge that by

providing administrative support to teachers, they can save time spent on corrective actions or hiring replacements in the future. The administrator may be unable to provide guidance and feedback without the necessary expertise to understand the needs of students with EBD and their teachers (Prather-Jones, 2011, as cited in Cancio et al., 2013). The study further concluded that administrators should use the data collected from the survey as guidance to keeping valued teachers. Given the historical shortage of special educators, the results surmised that teaching students with EBD will continue to be difficult for staff (Cancio et al., 2013, p. 92).

Teachers' Knowledge of Special Education Laws

One significant difference between teaching in special education and teaching in a general education setting is federal and state laws that drive due process requirements. SPED teachers are often required to comply with federal laws that ensure that those students with disabilities are offered a "Free and Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE) in the "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE) possible. What teachers know about federal laws can be a major factor that leads to teacher stress and burnout. With federal laws, SPED students often spend more time in an inclusive, general education setting. Making sure there is a collaborative relationship with general education instructors, as well as monitoring the progress of students, often adds additional stress to special educators. O'Connor et al. (2016) conducted a study to quantify the level of due process knowledge on the part of general education teachers.

Due to the increasingly important role that classroom teachers play when it comes to special education, the study examined the knowledge of general education teachers of SPED laws and regulations as they pertain to FAPE and IDEA Section 504 ("Free appropriate public education under section 504," 2010). The teachers selected to participate in the study consisted of 58 general education K-8 teachers in the New York City metropolitan area. The survey

consisted of 24 items, 18 true or false questions about federal legislation under IDEA, and 4 open-ended ones that assessed their knowledge of section 504 of IDEA and how the laws impact working with students and the training they have received in the laws (O'Connor et al., 2016, pp. 10-13).

The results of the survey indicated that teachers were lacking in essential knowledge of IDEA and possessed limited knowledge of the provisions of Section 504. Training covering IDEA and Section 504 was also lacking, with only 21% of respondents identified as having coursework related to special education laws. When asked to identify the main provisions of SPED laws, only 34% understood the basics of section 504. Seventy-four percent of teachers surveyed in the study believed that for students to receive services under Section 504, a specific diagnosis of a special education disability category needed to be made, which is not true. This may indicate that teachers would not pursue possible services under Section 504 for their students if no disability were indicated. The research and study confirmed the need for general education classroom teachers to be better informed and trained in special education law (O'Connor et al., 2016, pp. 16-17). The study did not list possible limitations, but one could call for future studies on how knowledge of special education law, or lack of it, impacts the case managers of students with disabilities.

Differences in Job Satisfaction Between General Education and Special Education

Teaching students with special needs requires support on a district as well as school level from policymakers and administrators. In the author's personal experience as a special educator, there has been an inequality of support between general education and special education. Stempien & Loeb (2002) conducted a study to examine the differences pertaining to job satisfaction between general and special educators. Stempien and Loeb addressed previous works

addressing two questions, 1. “Which group of teachers is most troubled by job dissatisfaction?” and a follow-up 2. “What are the sources of such job dissatisfaction?” (Stempien & Loeb, 2002, p. 259). Previous work discussed had been found to be ambiguous in comparisons of job satisfaction between the two departments. The assumption prior to this research was that job satisfaction was directly related to student success.

Stempien and Loeb (2002) initially intended to conduct a comparison of job satisfaction between general and special education but found it necessary to include teachers that had crossed into both areas of education. The survey would include teachers that taught students without disabilities in a general education setting, teachers of students identified as having emotional and/or behavioral impairments and who had been placed in special education programs, and teachers of students from both types of programs. Of all 116 teachers who returned the survey, 60 were general education teachers and 56 were special education teachers. Of the SPED instructors, 20 taught students across settings. There were no significant differences in teacher demographics (Stempien & Loeb, 2002, p 260). The questionnaire consisted of items about life satisfaction as well as those specifically related to teaching. The items were scored utilizing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” (Stempien & Loeb, 2002, p. 261).

The results found that all three groups agreed that they would most like to change the size of their classes, the amount of paperwork, and the amount of time spent planning. Teachers of students in general education and combined general and special education classrooms responded that they enjoyed the opportunities to be creative and challenged more than the educators in exclusive special education settings. The research further found that none of the three groups of teachers were satisfied with life in general, however, teachers of EBD students in exclusive

SPED settings were found to have a higher level of job dissatisfaction than their counterparts. The research was limited due to a small sample size and called for future research across a national setting and demographics (Stempien & Loeb, 2002, pp. 263-265).

Special Education Burnout and Job Satisfaction

The previously reviewed studies have established the relationship between relationships with administration and job satisfaction in the field of special education. The implications were that teachers were more likely to stay if satisfied and supported by staff. Robinson et al. (2019) further addressed the relationship between job satisfaction and burnout in special education. The purpose of the study was to investigate the ongoing shortage of special education teachers and the increasing attrition rate of teachers in the field as they relate to job satisfaction (Robinson et al., 2019, p. 295).

The participants completed a survey on burnout. The survey sample consisted of a total of 363 public special education teachers from 34 states across elementary, middle, and high schools. 81% percent of the participants identified as female, with 65% of the sample holding a master's degree. The participants were split in experience, with 50% having over 10 years and 50% having less than 10 years in the field. The survey utilized an electronic survey method to collect data nationwide. The survey consisted of 22 questions from the MBI-ES (1986). The MBI-ES (1986) is the most widely used instrument for measuring burnout among educators (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Maslach et al., 1996, as cited in Robinson et al., 2019). The MBI-ES utilizes a Likert scale ranging from zero to six, with zero = never to six = every day (Robinson et al., 2019, p. 297). The results of the 22 items on the MBI-ES were then analyzed using canonical correlation analysis (CCA) against the teaching characteristics of the demographic. CCA allows for analysis between two sets of variables that contain multiple

dependent and independent variables (Hair et al., 1998; Lewis-Beck et al., 2004, as cited in Robinson et al., 2019, p. 297).

When analyzing the difference between the job satisfaction and burnout questions, the survey's findings revealed results indicating two statistically significant canonical correlations between job satisfaction and the level of teacher burnout. The data supported the hypothesis and concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between teacher burnout and job satisfaction. Teachers that experience lower job satisfaction are more likely to experience burnout (Robinson et al., 2019, p. 300).

The research team concluded that special education teachers are under enormous stress due to the job demands. The study confirmed that there is a direct relationship between job satisfaction and feeling valued and burnout. The findings recommended that greater emphasis be applied to offering special education teachers greater opportunities for professional development, classroom support, and ongoing research to increase job satisfaction, specifically regarding teacher burnout (Robinson et al., 2019, p. 300).

Too Stressed to Teach? Teaching Quality, Student Engagement, and IEP Outcomes

The studies previously addressed in this work have established a continuing nationwide shortage of special education teachers due to attrition. The attrition rate cannot be attributed to only normal (retirement etc..) or expected reasons. This thesis, through document review, has established that factors not limited to a lack of administrative support contribute to special education teacher burnout. Wong et al. (2017) studied the effect of one of the components of burnout, teacher personal accomplishment, as related to student IEP outcomes. The study hypothesized that teacher stress was related to teaching quality and student engagement. The study further hypothesized that the three components of burnout (Malach & Leiter, 1999),

teacher stress, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, had indirect effects on IEP outcomes through teaching quality and student engagement (Wong et al., 2017, p. 413).

The review cited that the annual attrition rate for special educators was twice that of general education teachers at 13% (Cook & Boe, 2007; McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008, as cited in Wong et al., 2017, p. 412). The study sought to identify the direct effect of teacher stress and burnout on the quality of teaching. The study utilized a proposed working model of teacher burnout developed in a previous study by Malach and Leiter (1999). The model focused on burnout resulting from work demands, collegial support, school culture, teacher personality, and qualities, as well as societal values and federal laws (Wong et al., 2017, p. 413).

The data was a secondary analysis of 79 special education teachers and one randomly selected student with ASD on their caseload. The measures utilized the six-item Autism Engagement Rating Scale (Ruble et al., 2013, as cited in Wong et al., 2017, p. 417) to assess the quality of interaction between the student and the teacher. The Psychometric Equivalence Tested Goal Attainment Scaling (PET-GAS) assessed the individual educational outcomes. Teaching quality was measured using the seven-item Teacher Behavior Scale (Mahoney & Wheeden, 1999, as cited in Wong et al., 2017, p. 417). Teacher burnout was measured using the 22-item Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (Maslach et al., 1997). The last item the study measured was teacher stress, which was measured using the 43-item index of Teaching Stress (Greene et al., 1997, as cited in Wong et al., 2017, p. 417). Data on teacher levels of the measure were collected at the beginning of the year, and the student IEP outcomes using PET-GAS were collected at the end of the year to measure the relationships.

Wong and associates verified that teacher burnout and stress had impacted student learning outcomes directly and indirectly through the type of interactions received with the

instructor (Wong et al., 2017, p. 418). The overall conclusion of the study was that stress on the teacher directly impacted the quality of their work with students. Stress impacts engagement, teaching quality, and IEP outcomes. The work clearly identified the ripple effect that stress and burnout have on the teacher's work on IEPs, the quality of instruction, as well as the daily interactions with students. When addressing teacher attrition, the study did not specifically identify the causes of the stress, only that the teacher's stress level impacted both teacher performance and the quality of instruction students received from the instructor. The work studied the impact of the stress that a relationship with the one student of each sample teacher's caseload could have on the quality of instruction. The study conducted by Wong et al. (2017) concluded that burnout factors both indirectly and directly impacted teaching quality, that in turn affected the results of IEP goals.

Relationships Between Working Conditions and Special Educators' Instruction

Thus far, this thesis has examined elements that contribute to teacher burnout in the area of special education. Bettini et al., in a work from 2016, focused on the relationships between working conditions and special education instruction. Bettini et al. focused on two questions to drive their research: 1. What working conditions are related to special education teachers' instructional quality and/or the achievement of students with disabilities? 2. How might these working conditions influence special education teachers' instruction and/or the achievement of students with disabilities (Bettini et al., 2016, p 179)? The article did not focus on or allude to the issue of burnout in special education; however, its findings provided further implications to support this thesis.

Bettini et al. (2016) focused on six elements crucial to less experienced special education teachers, (a) school/district culture, (b) instruction-focused administrative and collegial support,

(c) instructional materials, (d) instructional grouping, (e) time for instruction, and (f) time for planning (Bettini et al., 2016, p. 180). The study was conducted through a review of research-based works utilizing many online academic search vehicles. Bettini et al. reviewed studies that found that schools that shared responsibility in each of the six elements determined the academic achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs, and promoted better teaching quality on behalf of special education instructors.

School culture is defined as the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, and rules that influence and shape the operation of a school. The culture of a school also includes schools and districts that approach racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity (Sabbott, 2013). The research of Bettini et al. did not cite any direct correlation between special education teachers and students with disabilities' success in relation to school culture. However, it was deemed plausible that school cultures would play a role in academic instructional quality and student success (Bettini et al., 2016, p. 181).

Bettini et al. research concluded that instructional and administrative support was particularly critical to the success of beginning special education teachers. The authors were limited to one study that focused on the topic (Bishop et al., 2010, as cited in Bettini et al., 2016, p. 181) that found the more successful beginning special education teachers experienced more instructional support provided by skilled and established mentors and colleagues. It was determined that a single study was not enough to support the topic as it relates to special education; however, it concluded that larger data sets as it pertains to general education would support the assumption that instructional and administrative supports are crucial to success (Bettini et al., 2016, pp. 181-182).

The availability of instructional resources and curriculum can shape what teachers learn and define the scope of instruction (Bettini et al., 2016, p 182). The study found three reviewed studies that identified the importance of curriculum to instructional quality. These resources were not specifically listed in the studies. Bettini and colleagues concluded that the curriculum, when used appropriately, could improve instructional quality in the special education setting. The personal qualities of the special education teacher interacting with instructional resources influenced instruction (Bettini et al., 2016, p 182).

Conclusions about instructional grouping found that special education teachers obtained higher quality instruction when instructing a smaller group of students that were identified as having the same needs in disability and academics. Teachers with larger groups of students and/or different learning abilities experienced less success. The success of the setting was also determined by the quality of instructional resources and curriculum and the personal attributes of the teacher (Bettini et al., 2016, p. 183).

Bettini and colleagues concluded that time for instruction concluded that special education teachers needed more time to complete adequate instructional plans. However, in schools that provided adequate instructional time for special education students, success in instruction and academic achievement of the students was higher (Bettini et al., 2016, p. 183). The results implied that school culture and administrative support that values and guards instructional time for special education experience higher achievement.

Bettini and associates' review concluded that time for planning was instrumental in special education teachers' willingness to implement new curricula and to collaborate with other teachers. Teachers with less time were not likely to implement new strategies, and the perception was that planning time took away from instructional time. The conclusions did not examine the

quality or coordination of the planning time (Bettini et al., 2016, p. 184). The overall implication of the research found limitations for special education teachers in the area of time to plan instruction.

Bettini and colleagues' overall conclusion of the review was that the research community has failed to establish the conditions in which special education teachers can best fulfill the responsibilities of effectively teaching the most vulnerable students. The study was limited by the small body of research of eight reviewed studies, and more research is necessary to develop a more thorough understanding of how best to support special education teachers in their commitments to students with disabilities and called for further research to better determine how working conditions relate to instructional quality. (Bettini et al., 2016, pp. 186-189).

A Multilevel Exploration of the Influence of Teacher Efficacy and Burnout on Response to Student Problem Behavior and School-Based Service Use

In 2010 Pas et al. conducted a study to establish a connection between teacher efficacy and burnout. "Teacher efficacy is the level of confidence teachers have in their ability to guide students to success" ("Teacher efficacy promoting student leadership leader in me," 2019). The study was conducted in the fall and the spring of the school year and focused on 491 teachers with 9,795 students across 31 elementary schools. The study's intent was to correlate student discipline referrals with teacher performance confidence, or efficacy, as well as how referrals related to teacher burnout. The results were surprising to the team, showing that teachers with low efficacy and high rates of burnout had fewer student disciplinary referrals (Pas et al., 2010, p. 13).

Pas and colleagues developed an abbreviated document review of previous studies to establish a background for their findings. This was done with the intent of establishing links

between teacher efficacy, burnout, and school organizational health. The review established the perception leading into the study that teachers with low efficacy would have lower instructional success and higher rates of disciplinary referrals with students. The review also referred to the related constructs of burnout and a school's culture and administrative support structure on student performance and behavior referrals. The intent of the study was to examine malleable teacher characteristics that influence efficacy and burnout to help develop future professional development aimed at improving student outcomes (Pas et al., 2010, pp.14-15).

Pas and associates hypothesized that low teacher efficacy and high burnout rates would correlate to increased utilization of school-based services and disciplinary actions during the school year. The team also hypothesized that teachers that experience the highest levels of burnout coupled with the lowest self-efficacy would need more frequent utilization of outside assistance (Pas et al., 2010, p. 15). These hypotheses established the methods for the study.

Data for the study was collected during the fall and spring of the 2007-2008 school year utilized from respondents of 491 K-5 general education teachers in the Maryland public school system. As previously mentioned, the teachers had a total of 9,795 students (Pas et al., 2010, p16). Results were obtained using the Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Checklist (TOCA-C; Koth et al., 2009 as cited in Pas et al., 2010, p. 16). The TOCA-C is a brief checklist of student behavior problems that center on concentration issues and disruptive behaviors that utilize a 6-point scale from "*never*" to "*almost always*" to measure behavior in the classroom. The TOCA-C was completed by homeroom teachers to each of their classroom students in October and May of the 2007-2008 school year. A five-point questionnaire was also presented to the teachers to indicate whether each child had been referred for academic services and disciplinary problems during the school year. The referrals included being assessed for

classroom support, special education, separate classroom settings, being sent to the principal, and being suspended from school (Pas et al., 2010, pp. 16-17). The items that pertained to special education assessments and referrals were based on a modified version of the Services Assessment for Children and Adolescents (Horwitz et al., as cited in Pas et al., 2010, p. 17).

Pas and the research team measured school organizational health utilizing the Organizational Health Inventory (Hoy & Feldman, 1987 as cited in Pas et al., 2010, p. 17). The OHI addressed the relationship between resources, collegial relationships between teachers, and student work ethic. The previously cited Maslach Burnout Inventory-ES (MBI-ES) form (Maslach et al., 1981) provided data on teacher burnout. The efficacy scale was derived from Hoy and Woolfolk. It comprised five items assessing teacher ability to handle students with behavior problems (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993, as cited in Pas et al., 2010, p. 17).

The researchers analyzed to determine the relationship between five dichotomous student outcomes, utilizing data from the spring TOCA-C assessment. The data indicated whether the student had been (a) referred to the student support team (SST), (b) referred for special education assessment, (c) sent to the principal's office, (d) suspended in-school, or (e) suspended out-of-school (Pas et al., 2010, pp 18). Three-level models conducted in the HLM 6.01 were conducted to examine the possible cross-level relationships of the five categories (Raudenbush et al., 2004, as cited in Pas et al., 2010, p. 18).

Pas and colleagues found that the influence of teacher efficacy was directly related to referral rates made to SST teams. Teachers with low efficacy for handling behavior concerns were found to be 23% less likely than colleagues to make SST referrals. Teacher burnout did not increase the likelihood of referring students to the SST team, nor did burnout increase the number of special education referrals (Pas et al., 2010, p. 21). The resulting data also found that

neither efficacy nor burnout was associated with students being sent to the principal's office or in-school suspension. Low teacher efficiency was not found to be associated with a student being suspended; however, teachers with high burnout in the fall were found to be 32% less likely to report that a student had received either in or out-of-school suspensions (Pas et al., 2010, p. 22). Regardless of efficacy and burnout levels, teacher referrals significantly increased when students were rated high in behavior and concentration problems. The study also showed that male students were more likely to be referred to SST and special education and to have discipline referrals than female students (Pas et al., 2010, p. 23).

The findings of the study were that teacher low efficacy and high burnout were associated with a higher level and were not significantly related to referrals to special education, referrals to the principal's office, or in-school suspensions. The findings show teacher efficacy and burnout were associated with SST and out-of-school suspensions. The direction of the effects was found to be opposite of what was expected entering the study. Students were less likely to be referred to a student support team when their teacher reported low efficacy. In addition, out-of-school suspensions were less likely when the teacher reported a high level of burnout (Pas et al., 2010, p. 23). The Pas and associates' study found that more professional development is needed to provide teachers with the skills to stave off burnout and increase efficiency. The study implies that, though fewer referrals are desirable, the context of the referral is important. This study concludes that students may be missing much-needed services due to teacher disengagement brought on by low efficacy and high levels of burnout (Pas et al., 2010, p. 25).

Special Educators' Working Conditions in Self-Contained Settings

This work has reviewed studies broaching topics that include stress, administrative support, collegial support, school culture, and teacher efficacy as they relate to burnout in

teaching children with disabilities. Special education teachers' working conditions also play a part in the potential for teacher retention. O'Brien and associates (2019) examined teachers' working conditions in self-contained classrooms serving students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The purpose of the study was to descriptively examine the working conditions that special education teachers (SETs) experience in self-contained settings serving students with EBD. The research was completed by a review of prior research on which working conditions were important to SETs and what was known about conditions in self-contained settings for EBD students. The work centered on how (a) administrators can influence and (b) prior research indicates likely contribution to SETs instruction and retention (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 41).

O'Brien and colleagues built off the work of Bettini and colleagues (2016) previously documented in this thesis focusing on elements of social context, that included administrative support, collegial and paraprofessional support, professional development (PD), and school culture, along with autonomy (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 41). For the purpose of their survey, O'Brien and associates focused more on a self-contained EBD setting, whereas the previous works had focused on teacher burnout in a general educational setting as there was limited work to support data pertaining to special education teacher burnout. The logistics of special education teachers' work include instructional resources and planning and preparation time (previously referenced by Bettini et al., 2016). Demands such as class size, homogeneity of students' learning needs, and the responsibility of lesson planning at appropriate academic levels were found challenging when teaching in a self-contained classroom of EBD students (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 43).

O'Brien and colleagues had a goal of understanding special education working conditions in self-contained settings. Due to the limitations of prior research, they found the need to conduct

a descriptive survey study of SPED teacher working conditions in self-contained classrooms working with students with EBD. The team intended to sample 224 school districts across the United States that represented all sizes and demographics; however, many declined or did not follow the protocols and were excluded from the survey. The final sampling was 41 districts with 459 SPED teachers (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 44). The survey would allow participants to complete it in 20 to 30 minutes and included scales that examined the working conditions: instructional grouping, instructional resources, instructional responsibilities, planning and preparation, autonomy, paraprofessional support, collaboration with colleagues, school culture, and professional development. The survey was given to 20 participating districts in the fall of 2017 and the remaining 21 districts in the spring of 2018 (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 45).

The results of O'Brien and colleagues' study found that the special education teachers (SETs) surveyed had an average of eight students in their classroom, predominantly with EBD. SETs agreed that their class size was reasonable but did not agree or disagree on their students' social-emotional learning needs but disagreed with the instructional grouping as it pertained to academic needs. The participants disagreed that it was manageable to deliver instruction that met all students' learning needs in one lesson (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 46).

The survey found that participants were neutral about instructional resources, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they had an adequate curriculum. The SETs surveyed agreed that they had to seek out curricular materials and knew how to effectively utilize the materials once located. The consensus was that SETs neither agreed nor disagreed that their students' individual academic needs were supported by the curriculum provided. The instructional responsibilities of the SETs surveyed averaged 2.74 grade levels, with an average of 9.42 lessons to prepare. In the

area of planning and preparation the SETs reported spending an average of 9.83 hours planning and preparing outside of contract hours (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 46).

The survey next reported administrative support and collaboration with colleagues as a part of social working conditions. The survey concluded that overall, SETs felt that their school's administration supported them in classroom management, student behavior plans, and student transition to general educational settings. SETs also felt included in student disciplinary decisions. They agreed that the administration cared about them as people and their instructional responsibilities. The survey respondents reported having a lot of control in the area of autonomy with choosing student incentives and reinforcers, selecting teaching methods, and evaluating students. The SETs surveyed also reported having a lot of control when selecting curricular materials, teaching content and skills, and disciplining students (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 47). Respondents reported ambiguous responses on the topic of paraprofessional support in the classroom in regard to paraprofessionals providing academic support and needing to be trained by SETs to do so. The SETs surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that paraprofessionals are an essential part of their classroom and could be trusted to make good decisions in a professional manner (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 49). SETs reported collaborating with paraprofessionals daily, other SETs weekly, general ed instructors monthly, related service providers monthly, and outside service providers less than monthly (O'Brien et al., 2019, pp. 49-50).

Respondents to the survey reported that in their school culture, about half to most general education teachers understood and supported SETs in the areas of student growth and discipline. The lowest score reported was half of the general education teachers understood what SETs do. Respondents to the survey reported participation in professional development one to three times

a month, but neither agreed nor disagreed with the effectiveness of PD (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 50).

The overall results of the survey found that the biggest logistical limitations on special education teachers continue to be the lack of preparation time for instruction, lack of instructional materials, and the responsibility of locating instructional materials. Most of the respondents reported having a supportive administration and school culture; however, there continues to be a lack of interaction with staff outside of paraprofessionals. The implications are that lack of logistical support, specifically in materials and preparation time, as well as the isolation of teaching in a self-contained setting, present the greatest strain on the intent of SETs to continue teaching (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 51). The survey results call for additional research that would address serious concerns about the extent to which SETs in self-contained settings are expected to enact complex instructional responsibilities for students with high disability-driven needs, doing so in relative isolation, and with limited planning time and instructional materials (O'Brien et al., 2019, p. 53).

A Case Study of Factors That Influenced the Attrition or Retention of Two First-Year Special Education Teachers

This thesis has reviewed previous works that expound upon factors such as administrative support, school culture, curricular support, collegial relationships, instructional responsibilities, instructional preparation time, and paraprofessional support that contribute, either directly or indirectly, to special education teacher burnout and intent to remain teaching. M.C. Grant (2017) conducted a study to examine the problems faced by two special education teachers during their first year in the field. The two novice SETs in the study worked at the same middle school, with

different classrooms and caseloads. The focus was to illuminate the issues contributing to inexperienced special educators' intent to continue in the field (Grant, 2017, p. 78).

Grant's study included an introductory background through a cursory literature review. The literature review built the background of the contributing factors of paperwork, administrative support, and burnout pertaining to the retention of novice special education teachers (Grant, 2017, pp. 78-79). The average student IEP can be 14 or more pages long, depending on students' needs. The time to develop, track data, and write the IEP can be overwhelming to even the most experienced SETs (Grant, 2017, p. 78). Grant referenced the results from a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education indicating that teachers were overwhelmed by the amount of due process paperwork required as part of their job requirements, which impacted their ability to manage other aspects of their jobs, such as instructional time (Klein, 2004 as cited in Grant, 2017, p. 78).

Grant's literature review reiterated a continuing theme of the documented literature reviewed in this paper, that administrative support continues to be highly influential in determining special education teacher retention. Leadership support that focuses on teachers' professional and emotional needs was found to be successful in reducing attrition rates (Boeddeker, 2010 as cited in Grant, 2017, p. 78). Special educators who perceive that the administration and school climate as being supportive to their needs, in opposition to those who do not feel included, and a part of a school climate, are more likely to remain in their position and the profession of teaching children with special needs (Grant, 2017, p. 78).

Grant's review of literature found that burnout occurs when an individual has job-related stressors that negatively impact those person's physical, mental, and emotional health (Grant, 2017, p. 78). The review focused on the topic of burnout and how being overworked resulted in

teacher fatigue and frustration (Berry, 2011 as cited in Grant, 2017, p. 78). The review introduced another contributing factor to burnout yet to be broached in this work, paperwork. Special education teachers reported completing paperwork requirements often took five hours a week. Federal and state requirements, such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), progress monitoring and reporting, data collection and record-keeping, and the lack of school-based support, were the basis for the survey (Grant, 2017, p. 79).

Grant conducted a qualitative case study to research factors contributing to first-year special education teachers' willingness to continue teaching. Specifically, the focus of the research included three themes: perceptions of administrative support, excessive paperwork, and teacher burnout. Two first-year middle school teachers were the subjects of the study. Neither had taught in the classroom before (Grant, 2017, p. 79). Along with a survey, the two participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that consisted of three open-ended questions and one suggestion that they felt would support the retention of novice special education teachers. Question one asked participants to list and elaborate upon four issues they faced during their first year as a special education teacher. The second question requested the participants to provide four examples of support they had received from their administrators. The third question posed to the two subject teachers was how likely they would be to continue teaching after their first year and four primary factors that contributed to their decision (Grant, 2017, p. 80).

The survey and question results from the two participants found that paperwork was a critical challenge to being able to complete due process requirements and also teach. Both subjects agreed that administrators were not supportive, which led to them feeling isolated. The participants did feel that their mentors were somewhat supportive. Both teachers indicated that they had felt stress and burnout, with one indicating she would look for another job and not

return. Both teachers cited poor training, difficulty in lesson planning, and ambiguity of special education policies and procedures as developed by administrators as other contributing factors (Grant, 2017, pp. 80-81).

Grant conceded that the limitations of the study were because of the small number of participants; however, the findings are of interest because they provide some insight into specific factors that are most critical to the attrition and retention of special education teachers. Grant called for further research into the types of mentorships and support that would be most effective in meeting the needs of these teachers during their first year in the field (Grant, 2017, p. 82).

Coping Strategies and the Impact of Challenging Behaviors on Special Educators' Burnout

Student behavior is a possible contributing factor to teacher burnout in special education. The author's personal experiences, particularly as related to teaching in a self-contained room serving children with EBD, suggest that violent and aggressive student behaviors would be a factor that leads to burnout. Hastings and Brown (2002) conducted a survey of 55 teachers and support staff of children with special needs that assessed burnout, coping with challenging behavior, and exposure to challenging behaviors (Hastings & Brown, 2002, p.148).

Hastings and Brown addressed two main issues: (a) direct measurement of staff exposure to challenging behaviors and (b) exploration of the mechanism of action of coping on the relationship between challenging behavior and staff burnout. They hypothesized that staff members' exposure to challenging behaviors and their use of unhealthy or maladaptive coping strategies were positive predictors of burnout. Hastings and Brown also expected that staff members with high levels of exposure to challenging behavior would report more feelings of

emotional exhaustion if they adopted maladaptive coping strategies to deal with their exposure to challenging behavior (Hastings & Brown, 2002, p. 150).

Hastings and Brown selected staff from three schools for children with developmental disabilities to participate in the research. The schools served 190 children with disabilities between the ages of 4 and 19. Fifty-five staff members (14 males, 41 females) participated in the research. They had been working with children with disabilities for an average of seven years. Twenty-seven participants were special education teachers, and 28 were support staff (Hastings & Brown, 2002, p 150). From the review of the study, it is not clear as to the federal setting of the schools selected, but two would be defined as public and the third a private care facility.

Data from a four-section staff questionnaire was the tool used for the study. The section collected demographic information, their special education experience, and qualifications. The three remaining sections of the questionnaire comprised the level to which staff had been exposed to challenging behaviors, the techniques and strategies staff used to cope with behaviors and staff burnout. How staff experienced student behavior was designed to reflect the most common forms of challenging behaviors. Staff were asked if they had been attacked, injured, verbally threatened with violence, or been witness to other staff targeted. The subjects were also asked about destructive behaviors of student self-injury and damage to school property by students. Each of the questions was rated using a scale of zero (no aggression), one (verbal aggression), two (physical aggression), and three (physical aggression with injury) (Hastings & Brown, 2002, pp. 150-151).

Hastings and Brown included in their study measures of coping and burnout. Challenging behavior coping strategies were measured using a brief situational format from

the Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE) inventory (Carver et al., 1989, as cited in Hastings & Brown, 2002, p. 151). The Brief COPE utilized 28 items presented as a coping statement, and respondents were asked to rate, using a fully anchored 4-point scale ranging from “I haven’t been doing this at all” to “I’ve been doing this a lot.” Burnout was measured utilizing the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1981).

Hastings and Brown's work found that teacher or staff demographics (qualifications, gender, and length of experience) were associated with burnout. The main statistical analysis was performed using Exposure to Challenging Behavior, Adaptive Coping, Maladaptive Coping, and how these overlapped. Data compiled confirmed that (a) Use of maladaptive (unhealthy) coping strategies to deal with challenging behaviors constitutes a risk in terms of staff burnout. (b) This risk is in addition to the risk associated with exposure to challenging behaviors. (c) Challenging behaviors and related psychological factors do not account for a very large proportion of the variance in personal accomplishment burnout. It is likely that other occupation or personality variables are more strongly related to feelings of personal accomplishment (Hastings & Brown, 2002, p 153). The limitations of the study include that it is 20 years old, not conducted in a public general education school, and in an indeterminate federal setting.

Teacher Stress: Sources, Effects, and Protective Factors

The studies reviewed in this thesis have established recurring themes that special educators identify as factors that lead to burnout. Administrative support, collegial support, and school culture are what special educators identify as factors that contribute to whether or not burnout occurs. The underlying suggestion is that when teachers of children with disabilities are in a supportive part of a community, they are more likely to be successful, content, and healthy.

Hayden et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study to examine the stressors of special educators and the unique way they responded to stress.

Hayden and study associates reiterate the themes of this work identifying previous works that establish sources of stress as being lack of administrative support, job demands, work resources, and the level of collaboration with colleagues (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 99). The study consisted of 16 special education teachers. The teachers were all Caucasian, three male and 13 female. The test group taught in a variety of urban and suburban settings in a large, Midwestern metropolitan region. Seven teachers taught at the elementary level, seven in middle school settings, and two in high schools. Six teachers had five or fewer years of teaching experience. Three teachers had six to ten years of experience. The remaining seven participants were late-career teachers with 11 or more years of teaching experience. The study was conducted via in-person interviews by the first author, Todd Haydon, Ph.D., and a team of six undergraduate student volunteers over the course of three years, four interviews in year one and six interviews in years two and three (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 100).

Hayden and associates, through the interview process and following data analysis, found that the top four cited sources of stress were administrative interaction, individual student challenges, teacher perceptions, and state mandates. The study found that lack of support consisted of lack of supervision of staff, lack of understanding special education due process, and inadequate training from administrators. According to the subject interviews, these factors resulted in the inability to effectively support special education staff in scheduling, programming, and student placement in classes (Hayden et al., 2018, pp. 101-102).

Dealing with student challenges was listed as the second leading stressor among special education teachers. The interviews found that teachers dealt with intense individual daily needs

of students, such as personal care, hygiene, and physical transport. Respondents also noted the physical needs of students. The psychological and behavioral needs of autistic students with communication limitations and the disruptive behaviors of students with emotional and behavioral disorders were frequent stressors indicated by three teachers (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 102).

The way teachers perceived and dealt with changes in their school, school district, as well as mandated procedures made at the state level, tallied as the third leading stressor of special education teachers. Seven teachers reported feeling unable to keep up with constant changes. What was perceived as uncontrollable factors created excessive worry, apathy, isolation, and feelings of being detached from everything leading to burnout; these feelings were particularly true for teachers older than 40. Six teachers also indicated stress brought on by the pressure of meeting expectations in state testing (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 102).

Six teachers associated changes in state programs such as testing reforms, policies, procedures, and curricula as negative. These teachers perceived the standardized testing and common core curriculum changes as unmanageable and stress-inducing. The study implied that having to complete due process and emphasizing Common Core is too limiting regarding students with disabilities, losing track of the individual student (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 102). The study also touched on interactions with peers and dealing with families of students as contributing factors to stress.

Hayden and colleagues next presented findings on how the stressors impacted the teachers interviewed. Of the teachers interviewed, three-quarters reported having a stress impact in two areas, self-efficacy (teacher confidence) and health and well-being. Twelve teachers reported that stress impacted the following two areas: self-efficacy and health and well-being.

Teacher efficacy was impacted by the teachers' lack of perceived control of their environment. Lack of classroom management due to behaviors increased the stress of not being able to teach, diminishing teacher self-confidence in performing their job. Eight teachers indicated that stress impacted their health and well-being. The effects reported were anxiety, perfectionistic behavior, fear of being attacked by students, feeling rushed, bringing stress home, developing obsessive-compulsive behaviors, and the impact on physical health, such as weight gain (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 103).

Hayden and associates also focused on what the subjects of the study found to be protective factors of stress. The factors were found to be the same as some of the stressors. Peer interactions and administration support, when reported to be positive, provided for a less stressful environment and greater teacher efficacy. Six teachers reported that their self-efficacy was high due to being empowered by the administration. Ten of the teachers interviewed felt it was important to engage in activities such as swimming, running, and other cardiovascular activities to reduce stress (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 104).

The study concluded that the same triggers that cause negative stress are the same for positive environments. The most prominent themes from the results of this study indicated that lack of administrative support, individual student challenges, teacher perceptions, and state mandates are sources of stress. Administrative support that is positive and helps teachers collaborate acts as a change agent from negative to positive teacher perceptions and promotes the health and well-being of staff. The study helped identify several strategies administrators could implement to reduce teachers' stress levels. The study recommended increased awareness of special education due process, saving teachers' time related to paperwork, increasing positive peer interactions, providing personal development opportunities specifically related to stress

management, and increased health and well-being programs. The authors acknowledged that there were limitations to the research caused by the small sample size. Different settings and teacher demographics could produce a more accurate sample in future studies (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 106).

Boon or burden: The effect of implementing evidence-based practices on teachers' emotional exhaustion.

This review has established that teacher views on administrative support, collegial interactions, time for lesson preparation, and training are key factors in special education success and in variables that lead to burnout. Ouellette and associates (2018) conducted a three-year study of 46 kindergarten through second-grade teachers of students with ASD to ascertain the effectiveness of an evidence-based curriculum on teacher stress. The teachers had no previous access to evidence-based programs or curricula. The study was conducted across a district's 52 kindergarten through second-grade classrooms. The district introduced an evidence-based curriculum, Strategies for Teaching based on Autism Research (STAR) program (Arick et al., 2004, as cited in Ouellette et al., 2018, p. 64). The district required the STAR training but did not require participation in the Ouellette study. Prior to implementation, the district had no evidence-based curriculum in place for ASD students (Ouellette et al., 2018, p. 64).

The STAR program consists of discrete trial training, pivotal response training, and teaching within functional routines. Discrete trial training (DT) was to be implemented using one-to-one teaching sessions that repeated practice of the same task for several successive lessons using positive reinforcers to support success. Pivotal response training (PRT) consisted of child-paced lessons where the teacher followed the student's lead while capturing teachable moments. Functional routines lessons were intended to occur naturally and include child self-

care. The curriculum recommends two DT sessions and at least one PRT session a day with functional routines reinforced as they occur naturally. Teachers were supported in STAR with initial training and coaching and support throughout the school year to implement and continue the use of the curriculum (Ouellette et al., 2018, p. 64).

The results of Ouellette and colleagues' study were measured by observations made by trained research assistants who monitored the implementation of the STAR program's three components. The observations were one-hour, once a month. Data was also collected via teacher self-reporting on how often and with what students teachers used STAR as an interventional tool. The research data was then correlated with the association between emotional exhaustion and teacher end-of-year fidelity and the end-of-year program fidelity and instructional strategy. The scores were contrived by utilizing the previously cited Maslach Burnout Inventory on emotional exhaustion (Ouellette et al., 2018, pp. 64-65).

The results suggested that teachers of students with ASD who were implementing any or all three components of the evidence-based program that they had been trained and coached in experienced less emotional exhaustion at the end of the school year (Ouellette et al., 2018, p. 67). Limitations of the study included not measuring the correlation between the EBP and student success, challenging behaviors, and teacher self-efficacy, as they related to emotional exhaustion in teachers. Despite the study's limitations, the results supported the implementation of evidence-based strategies as a helpful tool to reduce teacher burnout and stress, thus the potential for lessening teacher turnover and improving teacher self-efficacy (Ouellette et al., 2018, p. 68).

CHAPTER III: APPLICATION OF RESEARCH

Keys to being a successful (Regular or Special Education) teacher

With the passing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the right for children to receive Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), greater emphasis has been directed toward special education. From this author's point of view, as a special education instructor, students with disabilities need to be included in their school culture and academic settings as much as possible under FAPE. Greater pressure is often put upon SPED teachers leading to a higher attrition and burnout rate in comparison to their general education counterparts. In this author's estimation, the literature reviewed shows that several areas of emphasis should be addressed in preventing burnout leading to the retention of emerging and highly qualified special education teachers.

A recurring theme throughout this review was that their confidence or self-efficacy decreased when special education teachers felt isolated. This has been attributed in the reviewed work largely to the level of support from their administration. Conversely, when teachers felt supported by administrators, they were more likely to return to their positions, and confidence levels increased. The systemic departmentalization of public-school communities often contributes to SPED instructors feeling unsupported and isolated.

The research of this thesis, in this author's opinion, clearly shows that administrative support of special educators is important to burnout and retention of teachers. The review has shown that administrative support on a school and district level can often tip the scale of a SPED teacher's intent to stay, not only in their position but their intent to continue the career path of teaching. Administrative support from a district level that supports all staff not inclusive to special education should be built upon equity. Schools and districts have greatly increased the

amount of racial equity in the past 20 years. The equity this author speaks of is that of academic-collegial equity.

Co-teaching

Special education students often bring tremendous stress on both general education and SPED teachers due to their behaviors and level of willingness to participate in academics. One suggested solution is to implement required co-teaching on the part of both general educators and special education teachers. More research would have to be performed on the logistics required to carry out such seemingly monumental tasks. Possibilities would be a rotation with a staff substitute covering the teacher rotations in co-teaching, having general education students join instructional groups of SPED students by academic level, and having teachers co-teach with counterparts during prep times, once a week and being compensated by the district for their time. Extra compensation could also be an incentive for co-teaching. While the author acknowledges that co-teaching does happen, there is a need to facilitate more opportunities across grade levels and academics.

There are potential benefits of requiring co-teaching between SPED and general education. The first would be greater collegial support. Special educators are often isolated from the rest of the school. In self-contained classrooms, students receive most, if not all, of their instruction in the SPED environment. Requiring co-teaching would introduce these students to more social opportunities, give teachers perspectives on each other's scope of teaching, and provide a greater collaboration on student progress and IEP goals. Special educators may be able to offer input on interventions for student behaviors that support general educators, and general education teachers could share curricular material that may not be readily available in the SPED setting.

Developing Teams

District and school-level administration would also benefit from creating small teams incorporating educators and service providers. In the author's personal experience, districts set up personal learning communities by departments. PLC teams meet by grade level, while specialists and SPED meet separately. Experience has shown that there are also "whole school" PLC meetings that incorporate district mandates and curricular training. The curriculum often does not pertain to or is not available to special education students due to academic delays and disability. The author would suggest the creation of PLC teams composed of members of all service areas of the school. Preferably these teams would be staff that share students with disabilities. An example is a SPED student teacher with a caseload that shares a general education (homeroom) teacher, a specialist teacher (music, physical education, or art teacher), and a speech or occupational therapy teacher. The benefit again would be increased collaboration and less isolation of special education teachers and students.

The reviewed works of this thesis showed that the attrition rate of special education teachers is much higher than those of their general educator counterparts. The annual attrition rate remained around 25% for special education instructors for the past few decades (The IRIS center, 2014). This author suggests an "overhaul" of mentoring processes of new special education teachers. Establishing a comprehensive mentoring/probationary period at the start of a special education teaching career would increase administrative support, build collegial and school culture, provide robust training, lessen attrition rates, and decrease burnout.

Mentoring

Most districts provide mentors to new teachers. The issue is that these mentors are often busy teachers who struggle with the same limitations as their mentees. One solution would be to replicate student teaching for new hires. For the first three to six months of their probationary period, new teachers would be assigned to the SPED team to rotate through classrooms with established special education instructors. The established cooperating teachers would be with the probationary teacher across multiple classrooms that incorporate their caseloads and with the new teacher's assigned students. This creative solution would allow both mentor and mentee the opportunity to establish relationships with students and each other while lessening the stress levels of the new teacher. The process would also provide a greater opportunity for personal growth through observation, providing a more standard operational procedure that the special education teachers would follow. This structure would bolster the new special education instructor's self-efficacy.

Through the author's personal experiences in two separate school districts, mentors were often lacking experience (less than three years) or not professionally appropriate, i.e., being provided by a related service provider. This SPED instructor's last mentor was a district occupational therapist. The proposed mode would ensure that the mentor would be a departmental colleague. The results would directly impact the stress and possible level of burnout in a new district and/or school-level special education instructor.

Classroom Organization

For the purpose of the application, this author will apply it to a hypothetical self-contained classroom structure. Typically, schools have multiple self-contained classrooms and staff, including teachers and paraprofessionals. For the example of this scenario, this writer will

apply it to three self-contained classrooms with five or six students. One of the classrooms has an opening filled by a new teacher. In most situations, the newly hired teacher attends a district-wide orientation and training that touches on benefits, policies, and the mission of the district. Through personal experience, the “training” only serves to heighten the stress levels of new teachers, especially SPED teachers, as little or none of the topics covered relate to the special education role for which the teacher has been hired. There is no time in new hire training for physical classroom set-up, caseload review, support staff assignments, and the important curricular needs of the teacher’s caseload. The proposed probationary or apprenticeship period of teaching would alleviate the anxiety of a new SPED teacher. The new teacher would be able to focus on orientation and developing a relationship with their mentoring teachers.

Apprenticeship/Mentoring

The mentoring community created by this apprenticeship would help decrease the stress of starting the first day of school without knowledge of students, staff, and classroom layout. The mentoring teachers would set up the physical layout of the classroom with a basic layout that the new teacher and students could adjust during the year to fit their developing class aesthetic. The established teachers providing mentoring would have knowledge of any existing students the new teacher would have under their case management. The team, including the mentee, would meet in the time provided before the school year to establish the logistics of the probationary period. The mentoring staff would meet with apprentice teachers to establish case management, IEP, evaluation/reevaluation dates, and other due process requirements.

Apprenticeship/Mentoring continued

The apprenticeship would prevent new teachers from having to conduct IEP meetings for students with which they have yet to develop a relationship. Ideally the mentoring special

education staff would set caseloads to prevent the new teacher from having students with annual meeting dates in the first month or two of the school year. The apprentice teacher would be required to attend and observe IEP meetings given by mentoring staff, further strengthening both the team's procedural methods as well as confidence in the process. This time would allow new staff to observe every aspect of due process as it pertains to school, district, state, and federal mandates.

The apprentice/mentor relationship would foster opportunities for training. The new staff would have time to be trained in assessments, curriculum, and behavioral management. Depending on the level of professional experience, the apprentice could also provide knowledge and support from their own personal and professional experiences that would strengthen the team. During these supervised times, the mentoring teachers would implement classroom expectations (rules), curriculum, and classroom schedules with the new staff. Once these are established the hope would be for an organic flow into co-teaching and eventually independent teaching by the new SPED teacher.

The logistics of the mentoring and probationary period would depend on student and staffing factors. Student behaviors that may encumber their ability to attend general education classes would be "x-factors" to this plan's success. In this hypothetical, there would be five support paras, one for each room and two that float coverage. The mentoring staff would float to the probationary room when their schedule allows. These times would be when students attend specialists (gym, music, art, and media), instructional time in the general education setting, and pull-out or push-in groups with related services like speech and occupational therapy.

The proposed apprenticeship in the described application would be difficult to accomplish without a district mandate to implement the program. It would also be crucial to have the support

of the school administration. The administration would need the flexibility to help with staffing by floating support staff during absences.

In the proposed application of research, the apprentice program would support future co-teaching with general education staff. Observations of the mentor co-teaching would be scheduled for the apprentice teacher to see co-teaching in action with opportunities to eventually co-teach as well. The mentee would also be assigned to a PLC team with one or both mentoring staff. Co-teaching and PLC teams will further build the comfort level of new staff as they would enter these environments with the support of their mentoring staff.

Administration Support

The research of this review has established that administrative support, school culture, collegial relationships, student behaviors, and due process are contributing factors to teacher stress and burnout. The framework of the application of research would create environments in which new teachers and returning staff feel supported and guided. It is the belief of this author that requiring an apprentice program would mandate administrative support of all teachers, build a framework of operational standards for SPED, build greater teacher efficacy, and foster the collegial relationships that help create a healthy school culture. The result would address the teacher concerns established in the reviewed works that are leading factors in teacher burnout.

CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Literature

The author of this thesis chose the topic of burnout in special education teachers to illuminate the continuing issues faced in special education. Burnout among all teachers is particularly high, however as previously cited, the annual attrition rate remained around 25% for special education instructors for the past few decades ("Page 1: Teacher retention and turnover," n.d.), and burnout contributes greatly to the constant rate of attrition in special educators. The reviewed works point to several systemic factors contributing to the staff in SPED feeling burnt out, leading to a potential departure from teaching.

The literature reviewed in this thesis highlighted the main contributing issues leading to burnout of special education teachers. To address these challenges, the authors of the reviewed literature pointed out the factors teachers themselves offered as contributing factors to burnout, stress, quality of instruction, and intent to stay in teaching. Most of the literature reviewed in this thesis was published in peer-reviewed journals apart from supporting background information, assessments, and documentation of special education laws. The works reviewed provided information derived from surveys of teachers, with many utilizing the MBI inventory to assess levels of teacher burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., Maslach & Leiter, 1999). The commonality of the use of the MBI supports the fidelity of the data reviewed.

The most common theme identified by the review was the level of support provided at an administrative level. The level of administrative support was defined as the level to which the school supported teachers of students with special needs. A structured environment that provided support in the crucial areas of behavioral support, curriculum, and training was identified as ideal for teacher success. Conversely, when these supports were not provided, teacher stress increased,

as well as identification of burnout and less efficacy, leading to a decline in quality teaching. Administrative support can be concluded to directly affect school culture and collegial relationships of staff. Administrative support was found to have negative and positive outcomes that were found to be possible dependent on the level of support.

The review of the literature found a relationship between teacher level of burnout and the quality of instruction they provided students with disabilities. The overall conclusion of this review was that stress on the teacher directly impacted the quality of their work with students. Stress impacts engagement, teaching quality, and IEP outcomes. The works reviewed have identified that stress and burnout impact teachers' work on IEPs, the quality of instruction, and the daily interactions with students. The level of stress and burnout that a special education teacher is experiencing can lead to heightened levels of depersonalization and less feelings of personal achievement, as previously cited in the MBI assessment. These factors found that teachers feeling burned out will report students' behaviors less, call for support for behaviors less, and avoid interactions with staff and administrators, leading to isolation.

Limitations of Research

While the resulting data of this review is illuminating, much of the literature that was initially chosen for this thesis was over 10 years old. Though often dated, the reviewed documents did address the topic of special education teacher burnout, and much of the content was found to still have a relevant impact on special education, however there were topics found to be missing or limited. Secondly, many of the survey work reviewed identified that the study size was limited by the number of participants, permissions from districts to participate, and demographics of both student and teacher populations.

The research is limited by the size and scope of special education and serving those with disabilities. There are many categories of disability along with specific teacher skills and licensures that serve many categories. The scope of special education could explain the overwhelming conclusion that administrative support is critical to teacher success leading to less burnout and greater retention. The existence of a gap in literature is prevalent in relation to disabilities and educators' licensure and assignment.

Implications of Future Research

There needs to be more literature and data that contribute to the ambiguity of special education burnout. The literature reviewed in this thesis identified mostly systemic issues like administrative support and the general feelings of stress that led to burnout. Future research should focus more on student impacts on the teachers. Areas of focus could place greater attention upon behaviors, disabilities serviced, and the classroom type and setting in which instruction is provided.

More research is needed to illuminate the proper utilization of a teacher's skill set as it pertains to their licensure. For many years there has been a shortage of special education teachers. The quality and quantity of teachers in special education related to supply and demand were identified 30 years ago (Smith-Davis & Billingsley, 1993, p. 205). More research needs to be done relating to teacher shortages in special education due to burnout. Proposed topics would be shortages that lead to improper setting and licensure placement of teachers and the relationship of burnout to the continuing lack of special educators.

During the review process, this author found that students' behaviors were often approached in a generalized manner. Future research should center on specific behaviors related to SPED instructors and burnout. Finding out what types of behaviors cause the most stress on

staff could shine a light on support for students and staff from administration and behavioral specialists. The process of research for this dissertation found a lack of information on violence perpetrated upon teachers by students with disabilities. Future suggestions would be surveys asking special educators what types of violent acts they have experienced from students, as well as how they feel/felt about the actions. In the author's personal experiences, he has both heard of attacks on colleagues and personally experienced attacks. Understanding the prevalence of violence in special education would help administrators provide more support.

Application of Research

The author of this document has recommended a comprehensive mentoring program that is like the required student teaching program completed by all teachers to achieve licensure. As outlined in Chapter Three, an apprentice teaching program would move past the general topic of teaching provided in the student teaching process. The apprentice teacher would be placed in the specific environment for which they were hired. The program would establish standards across what is often more than one classroom of the special education team. The process would strengthen teacher efficacy and school standards for the special education department. It would also significantly strengthen the collegial support of the team. The proposed program would also act as a bridge to co-teaching with general education and create cross-setting personal learning communities or PLCs. The author believes that school districts should require the creation of such a program and that this would lead to less burnout among staff and greater teacher retention.

Conclusion

Special education teachers experience many factors that lead to stress and, potentially, to diminished self-confidence, feeling no personal accomplishment, and depersonalization of

students. When identified, these factors are defined as burnout. Findings from this review found that special educators' overall feelings of lack of support from administrators are the major contributing factor to teachers' intent to remain in current positions, stress, and burnout.

Conversely, the review of works found that when administrative support was positive, special education teachers felt less stress, had more positive collegial relationships, experienced greater job satisfaction, and ultimately experienced fewer feelings of burnout. The review process further determined that special education instructor burnout is not a recent development. Further works should strive to inspire the implementation of training, state- and nation-wide level standardized curriculum, as well as extensive mentoring programs. Creating a supportive and emotionally healthy environment will ultimately produce happier special educators who stay in education.

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