Abstract

Special Education Teacher Shortage and Retention Factors Dawn Cevallos, 2018: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: special education, teacher, shortage, retention factors, mentoring

The imbalance between qualified special education teachers and the number of special education students needing services has existed for decades. The shortage of special education teachers is not only a U.S. issue, but a global issue as well. Some research has indicated that special education teachers stay an average of 6 years in the classroom before leaving.

Research has indicated the number of new special education teachers leaving the field is higher than the number of veteran special education teachers that are retiring. This becomes very costly for school districts to continually recruit and hire new special education teachers. Therefore, school districts and administration need to take proactive steps to retain their special education teachers.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the retention of special education teachers. The instrumentation included a questionnaire and an interview protocol. The research questions focused on the following areas of retention: training, work rewards, work conditions, support, stress, coping strategies, and other factors. Research has indicated that factors such as training, rewards, positive work conditions, support, and coping strategies to deal with stress positively affect a special education teachers’ retention. The hope of this study was that the special education teachers will be provided with insight as to what was keeping them in the special education field, so that in turn the information gained may be used to retain incoming special education teachers and those who are thinking about leaving.