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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

EARLY CAREER SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL SITE INDUCTION SUPPORT

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

by

Yvette Perez

2012

To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

This dissertation, written by Yvette Perez, and entitled Early Career Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of School Site Induction Support, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Elizabeth Cramer

Delia C. Garcia

Diana Valle Riestra

Linda Blanton, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 28, 2012

The dissertation of Yvette Perez is approved.

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Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2012

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, whose love and support has guided me throughout my journey. To my parents, Olga and Gene, who taught me the true meaning of dedication, hard work and perseverance. They inspired me to reach for my dreams and instilled the confidence in me to achieve them. To my amazing daughters, Gabrielle and Alyssa, you are my greatest supporters and the source of all my pride. You have grown into amazing young women before my eyes. It is my sincere hope that you embrace your passion in life and never let any obstacle stop you from achieving your own dreams. Most importantly, to my remarkable husband Robert, who often took the backseat to the children, my classes and endless nights of writing. It is because of your unyielding love that I have become the person I am today. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

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I could not have made it through the ups and downs of my doctoral studies without my cohort. Throughout the past few years we grew into a family. I will treasure the friendships that were created and value the support each of you gave me.

In addition to my colleagues, I would like to acknowledge my friends and family that supported me throughout this endeavor.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

EARLY CAREER SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL SITE INDUCTION SUPPORT

by

Yvette Perez

Florida International University, 2012

Miami, Florida

Professor Linda Blanton, Major Professor

Research highlights teacher attrition as one of the biggest challenges facing public schools and their attempts to provide a quality teacher for every student (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The teacher shortage is particularly daunting in special education where teachers are over twice as likely to leave the field. The first few years of teaching are the most critical in determining whether or not a beginning teacher will stay in the teaching profession (Whitaker, 2000).

A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was utilized to examine research questions focused on the components of induction support that early career teachers received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their long-term retention in the classroom and their development as a quality teacher. Eighty seven early career special education teachers were surveyed during the first phase of the study and six participants were interviewed during the second phase. .

Data analysis of the Likert-scale survey used in the study revealed that the majority of the respondents received at least 21 of the 25 listed induction components. Moreover, early career special education teachers indicated that they valued all 25

induction components. In addition, findings revealed that over two thirds of the respondents indicated a desire to remain a special education teacher. Overall, early career special education teachers felt confident in their abilities to teach students with disabilities; however, nearly half of the respondents did not feel satisfied with the induction they received. Independent *t*-tests showed a statistically significant difference between teachers who indicated a desire to remain in special education and those that did not on the level of satisfaction with their induction experience.

The six interviews provided elaboration and clarification of the survey responses. The participants expressed their passion for the art of teaching, their dedication to students with disabilities, and their frustration with being a beginning teacher. Furthermore, it was reported that the overall school culture was not very supportive. Participants offered relevant ideas for additional or alternate induction components that would be more effective.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although there is no current consensus regarding the characteristics that define a "quality teacher" (Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Blanton, Sindelar, & Correa, 2006), few would challenge the need for a quality teaching force to improve the current state of education in the United States. Recent research highlights teacher attrition as one of the most challenging problems facing public schools and their attempts to provide a quality teacher for every student (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Large numbers of teachers leave schools and the profession every year, especially in low-income, low-performing schools with large minority populations where working conditions are often difficult (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). It is estimated that approximately 14% of beginning teachers leave teaching by the end of their first year, 33% leave within three years, and almost 50% leave before five years (National Commission on Teaching for America's Future, 2003). These alarming statistics reveal that the first few years of teaching are the most critical in determining whether or not a beginning teacher will stay in the teaching profession (Whitaker, 2000).

Research points to many reasons for the current teacher shortage and potential crisis in the teaching profession. Beginning teachers are often given the most challenging teaching assignments within a school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008), and they are expected to assume responsibilities similar to and be as effective as their more experienced colleagues (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). However, most aspects of the teaching environment are unfamiliar to beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) and once they accept teaching positions, they are often left to their own devices to succeed or fail within

their classrooms, resulting in feelings of isolation from their colleagues (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Kardos & Johnson, 2007). This can make it difficult for the beginning teacher to meet administrative demands and expectations. Inevitably, most research shows the root of the teacher shortage largely residing in dissatisfaction with the working conditions within the schools (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

The teacher shortage is particularly daunting in special education. It is estimated that special education teachers are over twice as likely to leave the field as their general education colleagues (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), making attrition one of the greatest factors working against a qualified teaching force in special education. In an attempt to meet the increased demand for teachers of students with disabilities, more and more unqualified applicants are entering the teaching profession lacking the knowledge and skills to be effective teachers (Thornton, Peltier & Medina, 2007). The magnitude of the additional demands placed on new special educators exacerbates the frustrations that all new teachers experience (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000), thus increasing the likelihood that these teachers will leave the profession within the first few years.

The passing of key federal legislation, (i.e., No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 [NCLB] and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 [IDEA]), has placed greater focus on the need to develop and retain quality teachers in the field of special education (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). The mandates set forth by NCLB and IDEA require schools to employ highly qualified teachers for each classroom (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2006). For special education, this means that teachers are required to be experts in the field of special education as well as to demonstrate competence in the subject areas that they teach (White & Mason, 2006). In addition,

special education teachers are being held accountable for the progress of their students within the context of the general education curriculum (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007).

At odds with attempts to impose rigor on the expectations of teachers is the serious national shortage of special education teachers (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000). Not only is there a severe shortage of teachers entering the field, but the attrition rate of special educators adds to the overall shortage (White & Mason, 2006). Additionally, current policies promote easy entry via nontraditional preparation and alternative certification routes which, in turn, threatens to dilute teacher quality (Sindelar, et al., 2005). The teacher shortage problem has serious and far-reaching implications for students with disabilities (Billingsley, 2004a). The consequences of the shortage include inadequate educational experiences for students, reduced student achievement levels, and insufficient competence of high school graduates in the workplace (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). Minority and low-income students in urban settings are most likely to find themselves in classrooms staffed by teachers who are not certified for their teaching assignment (Darling-Hammond, 2003) and have limited knowledge about the content material (Huling-Austin, 1992). It is imperative that the retention of quality special education teachers be addressed by the schools.

Teacher Socialization

The socialization of the beginning teacher can determine whether the first few years are a success or failure. Thus, the process of how teachers are socialized within the school's culture is important not only for the new teacher but also for the school community that provides the experience. Professional socialization, the process whereby

the beginning teacher learns about and becomes a part of the organization, has a direct impact on teacher quality and retention (Angelle, 2006). Socialization leads to identification with the school organization, its goals and mission. School organizations support their beginning teachers' socialization not only by providing formal orientation programs, but also by promoting supportive environments. Beginning teachers' relationship with insiders, such as administrators, veteran colleagues, peers and mentors are pivotal resources for effective socialization. In fact, Morrison (2002) discussed the fact that the characteristics and structure of a beginning teacher's social networks affect socialization outcomes, such as organizational knowledge, task mastery, role clarity, and retention.

When teachers decide whether or not to stay in the profession, they are influenced by the quality of their interactions with fellow teachers. Research suggests that the prospects of teacher retention increase when schools are organized for productive collegial work (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). In the context of special education, beginning teachers have stated that they are likely to receive informal support from their colleagues more often than other forms of support and are more likely to find this support helpful (Whitaker, 2000). Research emphasizes the importance of collegial support for beginning teachers (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004). Beginning teachers' socialization and development is not necessarily contingent upon the provision of a formalized support program, but rather upon how teachers interpret and experience their role (Cole, 1991). The context in which beginning teachers work, as well as the many people with whom they interact on a daily basis, all influence their development as a quality educator.

Induction Support

The literature overwhelmingly promotes support for beginning special education teachers as a way to encourage their success in working with students, as well as to increase their desire to remain in the teaching profession (Billingsley et al., 2004; White & Mason, 2006). Many states have attempted to combat the severe teacher shortage by offering programs that encourage the retention of special education teachers. Education is taking its cue from other industries: formalized sustained training matters (Wong, 2004). There is little consensus on the components of induction. However, most research reports that support for beginning teachers must include a mentoring component, time for collaboration with peers, administrative support, and ongoing professional development within a professional school culture (Billingsley, 2004a; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Whitaker, 2000; White & Mason, 2006; Wong, 2004).

Increasingly, school systems across the country have begun to provide support, guidance, and orientation programs, collectively known as induction, for beginning teachers as they enter their first year as a classroom teacher (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Induction programs are built around the premise that regardless of how well teachers are prepared, beginning teachers need support to transition from college student to classroom teacher (Billingsley et al., 2004). Well-conceived and well implemented teacher induction and mentoring programs are successful in increasing job satisfaction, which leads to the retention and development of quality teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Developing quality teachers is important because what the teacher knows and can do in the classroom is the most important factor resulting in student achievement and increased outcomes for students (Wong, 2004).

Induction is a process. It is a comprehensive, coherent and sustained process of development that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain beginning teachers, helping them to develop into lifelong learners (Wong, 2004). While many induction programs focus on the survival phase of teaching, high-quality programs strive to support beginning teachers' development as professionals, thus serving their dual purposes of increasing retention rates and developing highly effective educators able to meet the challenges of teaching all students to high standards (Dinkes, 2007).

Mentoring

Support through mentoring programs is quickly becoming the preferred method for induction support. Mentoring has become such a prevalent system of support that it is often used interchangeably with the term induction. However, mentoring is just one component of a comprehensive induction program, albeit an integral one. Mentoring is an action. It is what mentors do that matters. A mentor is a single person, usually assigned by the principal, whose basic function is to offer assistance and help to a new teacher (Wong, 2004). Further, mentoring is defined as the personal guidance provided, usually by a seasoned veteran, to beginning teachers in schools (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). About two-thirds of beginning teachers have stated that they work with or have worked closely with a mentor, yet one out of four beginning teachers claim that they received either "poor support" or "no support" from their mentor (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Administrative and Collegial Support

The role of administration is crucial in fostering a supportive environment for beginning special education teachers (Hansen, 2007). Administrators have a direct

influence on the culture created in their building and are directly tied to the working conditions of a school site. Positive working environments are critical to special educators' job satisfaction and retention. Administrators play a key role in helping to develop environments in which all members of the school can help to support and learn from each other, thus reducing the isolation felt by beginning teachers. The role of quality leadership points to the principal's ability to provide both social and structural supports for productive and rewarding collaboration among teachers (Johnson et al., 2005).

In many cases beginning special educators do not have the support network that general educators enjoy, and they often have to rely upon themselves to understand and solve their own problems (Hansen, 2007). In order to combat the isolation felt by many special education teachers, educational leaders must provide special education teachers with professional development that is ongoing and aligned with the teachers' individual needs.

Professional Development for Special Education Teachers

The need for professional development for early career special educators is even more crucial because of the constant turnover linked to the overwhelming number of teachers leaving the field. Special education teachers come from varying types of teacher preparation programs. These teachers' instructional practices are most often geared towards meeting the individualized, unique needs of students with disabilities (Hansen, 2007). In addition to mastering the curriculum, teachers must also be fully versed in accommodations and modifications in order for their students to have access to and meet the same standards as their non-disabled peers. The inimitable demands placed on special

educators tend to exacerbate the isolation they feel. The key to a teacher's satisfaction in the school's environment seems to lie in the level of success the teacher encounters in raising his or her students' academic performance. For this reason, giving teachers the tools necessary to promote student achievement is critical (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Well-planned professional development will improve the abilities and skills of the teachers, move the school one step closer to alignment with the school improvement plan, and enable special educators to improve teaching and learning (Thornton et al., 2007).

Teacher attrition is one of the most challenging obstacles public schools face in their attempts to ensure a quality teacher for every student. As state previously, over 30% of beginning teachers will leave the profession within the first three years of teaching, with nearly 50% leaving the profession by their fifth year (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The teacher shortage is particularly great in the field of special education where teachers are more than twice as likely to leave. Hence, it is critical to further investigate the teacher development process, particularly during the teacher induction phase, in order to examine what support mechanisms foster increased retention rates and the development of highly effective special educators.

Purpose

The research on teacher attrition clearly establishes the negative impact it has on student achievement. The shortage of special education teachers is greater than teacher shortages in any other area, including mathematics and science (United States Department of Education, 2011). The problem is also costly. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007), the problem of teacher attrition

is “costing the nation over $7 billion a year. It is draining resources, diminishing teaching quality, and undermining our ability to close the student achievement gap.” (p. 1). Compounding this problem is inadequate support of teacher preparation programs, quick alternative routes to certification with limited skills training, and a growing population of students with disabilities. The prevailing need for special education teachers is causing schools to hire many new teachers each year. Determining how to retain and support these teachers is of utmost importance.

One of the most fundamental challenges for the field of special education is keeping quality teachers in the classroom. Although the causes of the special educator shortage are complex and varied, teacher attrition is clearly a major contributor (Billingsley, 2004b). The retention of teachers is a critical part of solving the problem (Thornton et al. 2007). The shortage problem will not be solved by recruiting thousands of new people into teaching if many leave after a few short years (Billingsley, 2003; Billingsley et al. 2004). Instead, coherent, comprehensive and sustained programs that foster professional development and support during all stages of teachers’ careers serve as positive influences on special education teachers’ retention. Research has shown that induction can be an effective and instrumental support mechanism for supporting and retaining new teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). However, data on the effectiveness of school site induction activities for beginning special education teachers are sparse.

Problem

This study examined early career special education teachers’ views of the components of induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their retention and development as a quality teacher.

Although studies exist that examine the first years of teaching for general education teachers, the reasons for teacher attrition, and the need for beginning teacher support, limited research has focused on the first years of teaching for special education teachers (Whitaker, 2000; White & Mason, 2006). Much less attention has been focused on beginning special education teachers' responses to effective support in their teaching environment (Boyer, 2005). Although research can be found regarding the importance of induction support for beginning special education teachers, little is known about the effectiveness and relevance of these supports. To date, no published studies were found by the researcher that address early career special education teachers' perceptions of the induction components they received, or the effects induction support had on a teacher's retention and development as a quality teacher. Careful attention to the specific induction program within a school's professional culture for early career special education teachers is needed if a committed and qualified teaching force is to be built and retained at that school. This study's findings contribute to the growing body of research that attempts to describe effective supports for early career special educators and identify specific induction factors that encourage teacher retention.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine early career special education teachers' views about the induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their retention and development as a quality teacher. More specifically, the research questions were:

1. How do early career special education teachers perceive the level of induction support they received during their first years of teaching?

a. What types of induction support did early career special education teachers receive at their school site?

b. What types of induction support do early career special education teachers perceive as most valuable to their development as a quality teacher?

2. What are the similarities or differences in perceptions about induction support between early career special education teachers who plan to remain in the special education profession and those who plan to leave the special education profession?

3. How does the perceived level of induction support received by early career special education teachers influence their views about (a) their work, (b) student achievement and (c) their professional futures?

Definition of Terms

The following section provides definitions of terms referred to throughout this study. These include terms and acronyms used universally in the field of education.

Attrition:

Teachers who leave the teaching profession altogether (Billingsley, 2004a).

Beginning Teacher:

Teachers with fewer than three years of experience (Billingsley, n.d., & Angelle, 2002). This term will be used interchangeably with "new" teacher.

Early Career Teacher:

Teachers in the first three to five years of service (Elliot, Isaacs, & Chugani, 2010).

Induction:

A system-wide, coherent, comprehensive and sustained process that is organized by a school district to train, support and retain new teachers (Wong, 2004).

Inservice Training:

Work-related learning opportunities for practicing teachers; inservice training connotes a deficit model of teacher learning in which outside experts supply teachers with knowledge they lack (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Mentoring:

Mentoring is an integral component of a structured induction program. A mentor is a single person, usually assigned by the principal of a school, whose basic function is to offer assistance to a beginning teacher. Mentoring is the personal guidance provided, usually by a seasoned veteran (mentor), to beginning teachers in schools (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Organizational Socialization:

The continuous process of transmitting key elements of an organization's culture to its employees (Newstrom & Davis, 1997).

Professional Development:

Learning opportunities that provide occasions for teachers to reflect critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Throughout the study, this term may be used interchangeably with staff development.

Retention:

Teachers who remained in the same teaching assignment and the same school as the previous year (Billingsley, 2004a).

School Grade:

Public schools in the state of Florida are assigned a grade based primarily upon student achievement data from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). School grades communicate to the public how well a school is performing related to state standards. School grades are calculated based on annual learning gains of each student toward achievement of Sunshine State Standards, the progress of the lowest quartile of students, and the meeting of proficiency standards. Schools receive grades “A” through “F”.

Special Education Teacher (Special Educator):

Educator who provides specially designed instruction to students with disabilities (CEC, 2008).

Student(s) with disabilities (SWD):

The term "child with a disability" means a child: "with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services" (IDEA, 2004).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher provides a review of the literature on induction supports provided by schools to teachers of students with disabilities to bring them into and keep them in the profession. In the first section, the researcher reviews the problem that this study addresses -- beginning special education teacher attrition in the early stages of teaching. In the second section, the researcher explores the concept of teacher socialization and the research to supports its relevance in providing supports for beginning teachers. Socialization is defined and the research relating to teacher socialization is reviewed. In the third section, the researcher reviews the literature on induction for both general and special education teachers. In the final section, the researcher reviews the literature on specific components of induction, to include (a) mentoring as induction, (b) principal and collegial support during induction and, (c) professional development during induction. Finally, the researcher summarizes the literature reviewed and makes connections to the current investigation.

Factors Contributing to Special Educator Attrition

Teacher attrition is epidemic in the field of special education. Data from a number of studies show that attrition of special education teachers is far greater than other fields (Fore, Martin & Bender, 2002; Nicols & Sosnowsky, 2002), with an estimated 8% to 10% of special education teachers leaving the field annually (Whitaker, 2000). As more and more teachers leave the profession each year, the urgency to recruit and retain quality teachers grows. The shortage problem has severe implications for students, especially students with disabilities. The results for students who are denied

access to a quality teacher are inadequate educational experiences, reduced levels of student achievement, lowered graduation rates, and reduced levels of basic workplace skills (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005).

According to Billingsley (2004b), efforts to reduce attrition should be based on an understanding of factors that contribute to special educators' decisions to leave the field. Her 2004 literature review extends her earlier review (Billingsley, 1993) and one by Brownell and Smith (1992) that reviewed attrition research through the early 1990's. In the 2004b review, Billingsley provides a thematic synthesis of twenty studies that investigated factors contributing to special education teacher attrition and retention.

Billingsley's synthesis revealed that a wide range of factors influence attrition. These include teachers' personal circumstances and priorities, teachers' qualifications, the work environment and conditions, and the teacher's affective reactions to work. Billingsley notes that most of the attrition studies have focused on problematic work environment variables and their relationship to attrition. In summarizing the research, she suggests that poor work environment factors can lead to negative affective reactions, which in turn lead to withdrawal and eventual attrition.

Much of the research in special education attrition shows that a lack of administrative support is the underlying reason for teachers leaving special education (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Edgar & Pair, 2005; Kaff, 2004). Special education teachers report many of the same reasons for burnout as their general education peers (Kilgore, Griffin, Otis-Wilborn, & Winn 2003; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). However, the research reveals differences unique to the profession of special education (e.g., managing paperwork; making accommodations for instruction and testing; developing and

monitoring IEPs; scheduling students; and collaborating with teachers, paraprofessionals and other related services personnel).

Fore, Martin, and Bender (2002) synthesized the research on burnout and teacher retention in special education. In their review, Fore et al. examined research studies that have shown a higher burnout rate among special education teachers than general education teachers (e.g., Boe, Bobbit, & Cook, 1997). Furthermore, many studies delineated specific factors that led to special education teacher burnout (e.g., Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001; Miller et al., 1999; Russ, Chiang, Rylance, & Bongers, 2001; Schnorr, 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). These factors included increasing paperwork loads, stress associated with job requirements, a lack of planning time, lack of support from administrators, lack of proper staff development training, as well as the type of disabilities teachers deal with in the classroom. Fore et al. (2002) found that both large-scale surveys, as well as smaller interview/questionnaire studies of general and special education teachers, indicated the same general causal factors related to burnout in special education.

The findings of a study by Miller et al. (1999) support earlier research on special education teacher attrition. The authors surveyed a random sampling of Florida special education teachers to uncover the teacher workplace and affective variables that are significant predictors of a special education teacher's decision to leave teaching, remain in the same classroom, or transfer to a different classroom in another building or district. Results revealed that specific environmental variables (e.g., perceived stress, school climate, manageability of workload, and certification status) were more powerful predictors of career decisions than most teacher and demographic variables.

Using questionnaires mailed out to 400 special education teachers in Kansas, Kaff (2004) investigated the special educator's role and his or her intent to remain in the field of special education. Using content analysis to interpret the results, Kaff found three major areas of concern for special education teachers considering leaving the field: administrative support, classroom concerns, and individual issues. Lack of administrative support was the most frequently reported concern. Special educators in this study reported that colleagues and administrators lacked a clear understanding of the multitude of roles and responsibilities undertaken by special educators. Additionally, special educators indicated that general education teachers and administrators were not supportive of their work.

Kilgore et al. (2003) presented the preliminary results of a three year investigation on beginning special education teachers' problems of practice and the contexts in which they work. The research questions focused on finding the problems of practice that beginning special education teachers faced and examining the contextual factors that facilitated or impeded beginning special education teachers' efforts to solve their problems of practice. Kilgore et al. interviewed 36 graduates of special education programs from the University of Florida and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee using protocols that consisted of open-ended questions.

The findings reported by Kilgore et al. revealed that special education teachers have similar problems to those of general education teachers (i.e., concerns regarding behavior management and discipline, and finding time to plan for curriculum and instruction). However, findings uncovered unique differences specific to special education teachers. Special educators reported frustration because of large caseloads and

their inability to provide specialized instruction deemed essential in special education. In addition, special educators experienced isolation from other teachers. Although the beginning teachers typically described supportive relationships with other special educators, they usually felt segregated from their general education peers. These findings are similar to those of Kaff (2004).

Brownell et al. (1997) examined the reasons why special educators left the field in a study of 93 randomly selected Florida special education teachers that did not return to their positions after the 1992-1993 school year. The participants were interviewed via telephone and asked questions about special education teacher attrition and the causes for leaving special education. Over 70% of the participants indicated that they left the special education classroom to take positions that were education-related and most of these were to teach general education. Additionally, the majority of teachers who left the classroom reported that they were dissatisfied with conditions of work (i.e., class size, problems with student behavior, diverse student learning needs, insufficient administrative support, and a lack of personnel and material resources). Many of these teachers reported that they would have remained or returned to special education if they received more administrative support and instructional assistance in the classroom. In addition, many special education teachers in the study reported that they left the classroom because of better job opportunities or events that were unrelated to their job.

In their 2005 study, Edgar and Pair argue that the prevailing knowledge about special education teacher attrition is misleading. These researchers conducted telephone surveys with former University of Washington students who graduated with special education certification between 1995 and 2001. This follow-up study identified the

current positions of the graduates and for those not teaching in special education, examined the reasons they moved out of the field. These researchers found that 78% of the graduates were still teaching in special education, albeit not in their original schools. Seven percent were in education-related fields. The data show that special educators are mobile and although a significant number of schools have trouble locating and retaining special education teachers, many special education teachers are not leaving the field, but are only moving to other positions. Any kind of move opens a position that must be filled.

Most attrition studies focus on problematic work environment variables as predictors of career decisions (Billingsley, 2004b; Brownell et al., 1997). Many of these factors affect general education teachers as well. However, research reveals variables unique to the field of special education (Fore et al., 2000). Special educators reported frustration because of large caseloads and their inability to provide specialized instruction deemed essential in special education. In addition, special educators experienced isolation from other teachers. Although the beginning teachers typically described supportive relationships with other special educators, they usually felt segregated from their general education peers (Kilgore et al., 2003). Additionally, the lack of a clear understanding of the multitude of roles and responsibilities undertaken by the special educator was cited (Kaff, 2004). Brownell et al. reported that many of the special education teachers felt that they would have remained or return to special education if they received more administrative support and instructional assistance in the classroom.

Socialization of Early Career Teachers within the School's Culture

Socialization is the process by which information, norms and values regarding the life of an organization are exchanged between new members and veterans of the organization (Pugach, 1992; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). This section will discuss the meaning and relevance of socialization and the various ways socialization is experienced in the workplace. The unique needs of early career special education teachers in the socialization process will be discussed. Additionally, this section will review the literature and research that demonstrates a connection between induction and the socialization of beginning teachers.

Socialization Defined

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) describe organizational socialization by saying, "In its most general sense, organizational socialization is then the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (p. 3). Similarly, Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006) define organizational socialization as "the process through which a new organizational employee adapts from outsider to integrated and effective insider" (p. 492). As a reciprocal process, the novice negotiates his or her role within the organization, while the organization provides vital information to the novice to help him or her integrate. Socialization is a period of personal as well as professional development; it is on-going throughout the individual's career (Feldman, 1976).

Feldman (1976) presents a model of individual socialization that focuses on the novice as a part of the organizational culture. Feldman's model identifies three distinct stages of socialization that include explicit activities at each stage. According to the

model, a novice is completely socialized when he or she has completed all the stages. The first stage, Anticipatory Socialization, encompasses all the prior knowledge and learning experienced by a novice before he or she enters an organization. Accommodation, the second stage, is the period in which the individual first experiences the organization and attempts to become a participating member in it. There are four main activities that novices engage in during this stage: learning new tasks, establishing new interpersonal relationships with veteran employees, clarifying their role in the organization and evaluating their progress. In the third stage of socialization, novices reconcile the conflicts between their work within their own group and other groups which may place demands on them. This is the Role Management stage. One of the major implications of Feldman's (1976) work is the notion that socialization programs affect the general satisfaction of workers and the feelings of autonomy and personal influence workers have. This is important because of the connection between general satisfaction and decreased turnover.

Pugach (1992) builds on Feldman's work by reporting on the influencing factors that drive how teachers are socialized in the workplace. These factors include three sources that begin well before formal preparation for teaching occurs: (a) prior experiences and beliefs, (b) the nature and philosophy of teacher education, and (c) the workplace itself. Thus, the concept of teacher socialization is not one that occurs in isolation during the first year as a teacher. Socialization begins well before a teacher's initiation into the classroom; it builds on pre-preparation experiences, values and mores and continues throughout the employee's career.

Although the socialization phenomenon happens throughout the entire career of every employee, it is especially important for novices because they are generally deficient in some elements that are essential for survival in the organization (Fletcher, Chang, & Kong, 2008). The period in which a new member enters an organization is one of the most critical periods in his or her tenure process because this is the time when the novice determines the nature of the new organization and whether or not they fit in it (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

Research on Teacher Socialization

In reviewing the literature on beginning teacher socialization, three constant themes emerged. The research presented the need for community and collegial support (Angelle, 2002; Angelle, 2006; Cole, 1991; Holton, 2001; Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kaufman & Liu, 2001; Morrison, 2002). In addition, the research shows that the socialization process will occur naturally regardless of a structured, organized program (Angelle, 2006; Cole, 1991). Finally, a positive socialization experience brought about from an effective induction program will reduce turnover and increase a beginning teacher's desire to stay in a profession (Angelle, 2002; Holton, 2001).

Using a survey instrument sent to 2,214 Bachelor degree graduates from a large state university, Holton (2001) examined how new college graduates perceived the availability and helpfulness of new employee development approaches and if there was a relationship between these perceptions and the graduates' attitudes toward their organization and jobs. Most development approaches were perceived as helpful when they were available. Multiple regression analyses revealed a strong correlation between the development approaches and satisfaction, commitment, intent to stay, psychological

success and post-decision dissonance. The results supported the concept of devoting resources to providing high quality, new employee development initiatives.

Many experts agree that relationships are instrumental in socialization (Angelle, 2002; Angelle, 2006; Cole, 1991; Kardos et al., 2001), yet little is known about the types of relationship patterns that are most conducive to effective socialization. Morrison (2002) addresses this issue in her study by viewing the socialization process from the perspective of social network structure. Morrison surveyed first-year staff accountants and found that interactions with and relationships to experienced coworkers provided valuable ways for novices to learn and assimilate in the organization. In essence, new employees become socialized not only by interacting with insiders, but also by developing certain configurations of relationships with veterans. A newcomer to any organization needs an informational network for acquiring various types of information and they need a friendship network for feeling integrated into the organization.

Cole (1991) examined the connection between workplace relationships and teacher development. Through observations and interviews of 13 beginning teachers in Ontario, Canada, she built on the earlier ideas of the creation of a "community of learners" (Barth, 1990) and on the notion of building caring and helpful communities (Noddings, 1986). Cole argues for a natural and integrated approach to teacher induction. She encourages schools to strive towards the creation of a helping community where new teachers feel cared for and understand what it means to care and be cared for. Additionally, when caring and helping become the norm in a workplace setting, there will be no need to develop formalized programs of induction because teachers will be doing what comes naturally. Cole supports an alternative approach to teacher induction, one

that takes into account the individuality of the teacher, the school culture, and the socialization process.

Angelle (2002) compared the assistance and monitoring of beginning teachers at more effective schools and less effective middle schools, as well as the beginning teachers' perception of the processes within the school in more effective and less effective middle schools. Data were collected through classroom observations of beginning teachers and interviews with principals, mentors and beginning teachers. Angelle found that interdisciplinary teaming – grouping 2-4 teachers responsible for teaching the core academic subjects to the same small group of students –could help new teachers through the socialization process by increasing professional and collegial development. Effective socialization was seen as a result of the processes within the school, not necessarily from individual components. Finally, this researcher noted that a positive socialization experience decreased teacher attrition.

In a later study, Angelle (2006) explored the role of cursory monitoring by the principal and the quality of the assistance and monitoring received by the beginning teacher as sufficient to the ultimate staying power of the beginning teacher. Additionally, this study examined whether a state-mandated assistance and assessment program provided the needed elements for a positive socialization experience for the new teacher. The author used interview data both from the volunteer teachers whose total experience did not exceed two years and from their supervising principal. The study took place in four middle schools in a southern state. Angelle noted that the process of socialization for the beginning teacher was effective for learning the organizational culture; however, it did not necessarily serve to help the beginning teacher become an effective teacher.

Learning the social, professional, and organizational skills as part of the processes of an ineffective school will either promulgate ineffective practices or will produce an internal conflict in the beginner, thus leading to frustration, burnout and ultimately attrition. This study supported the findings of an earlier study by Brock and Grady (1998) that the principal is instrumental in the socialization process.

The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers has worked to demonstrate the importance of school culture in the process of socialization. Using multistage coding to analyze transcribed interview data of 50 first and second year teachers in a wide range of Massachusetts public school settings, Kardos et al. (2001) probed new teachers about their experiences with their school-based colleagues. The intent was to examine whether new teachers had easy access to other teachers and if their interactions were comfortable or strained, encouraging or discouraging, meaningful or perfunctory. The authors also looked at the role principal leadership played in these interactions.

Kardos et al. found that new teachers were socialized into one of three distinct school cultures: (a) veteran-oriented cultures, (b) novice-oriented cultures, or (c) integrated professional cultures. The first two, veteran and novice-oriented cultures, offered few meaningful structural mechanisms to orient, induct, and provide ongoing support for new teachers. Teachers received little professional guidance about how to teach. However, when new teachers were inducted into and socialized by integrated professional cultures, there were organizational structures such as mentoring arrangements and curriculum planning sessions that supported a positive socialization experience. In integrated professional cultures, new teachers described being provided with sustained support and having frequent exchanges with colleagues across experience

levels. In these cultures, there were no separate camps of veterans and novices. Expert teachers mentored and collaborated with their novice colleagues and often found that they, themselves, benefited from the exchange.

Similar to Angelle's (2006) findings, Kardos et al. found that principals proved to be key in developing and maintaining effective practices at their school. Teachers in schools with integrated professional cultures reported that the principals were present and responsive and focused teachers' efforts on improving teaching and learning. These principals were particularly attentive to the needs of new teachers.

Socialization of Special Education Teachers

The changing climate of special education provides a wide array of contexts in which socialization of the special educator can be viewed. Pugach (1992) reviewed the literature on socialization to "provide a backdrop both in substance and methodology for the subsequent consideration of what teacher socialization research might look like in special education" (p. 134). Pugach noted that general educators begin their career at an advantage over their special education peers. Prospective general education teachers often enter the field with an apprenticeship of observation acquired from spending over 12 years in the classroom as students. However, prospective special education teachers do not necessarily have the same opportunities to have observed teachers.

In addition, Pugach noted that general educators share in their technical culture. The existence of this culture reduces ambiguity for teachers and defines expectations. Yet, the technical knowledge associated with the practice of special education differs significantly from the current trends in teaching and learning for general education teachers. Finally, research on teacher socialization relates to the social unit exerting its

power on an individual. For special educators, that means dealing with two workplace cultures: that of the profession of special education and that of the specific school in which they work. Because of this unique paradigm, special education teachers are often isolated in a school (Pugach, 1992).

In summary, socialization is the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume a role within the organization. Although the socialization phenomenon happens throughout the entire career of every employee, it is especially important for novices (Fletcher et al., 2008) because this is the time when they determine the nature of the new organization and whether or not they fit in (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). In reviewing the literature on beginning teacher socialization, three constant themes emerged. The research presented the need for community and collegial support (Angelle, 2002; Angelle, 2006; Cole, 1991; Holton, 2001; Kardos et al., 2001; Morrison, 2002). In addition, the research shows that the socialization process will occur naturally regardless of a structured, organized program (Angelle, 2006; Cole, 1991) resulting in role dissonance, role ambiguity and role conflict (Billingsley, 2004a). Finally, a positive socialization experience brought about from an effective induction program will reduce turnover and increase a novice's desire to stay in a profession (Angelle, 2002; Holton, 2001). The research on socialization is especially relevant in the area of special education where feelings of isolation are pervasive.

Induction for Beginning Teachers

Wong (2004) defines induction as "a process--a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process--that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning

program" (p. 42). Researchers differ on what constitutes an effective induction experience. However, much of the research agrees that induction support for beginning teachers is fundamental for the retention and development of quality special education teachers.

Induction Research in General Education

Much of the current knowledge on beginning teacher induction centers on the work of Ingersoll and Smith. In 2004, these researchers examined the association between receiving supports and the likelihood of beginning teachers moving or leaving. The results support the association between offering some type of beginning teacher induction and teacher retention. Further, receiving multiple induction components had a strong and statistically significant effect on teacher turnover. The factors associated with reducing turnover are consistent with the literature on teacher retention. Beginning teachers benefit from having a mentor in their same field. This often takes precedence over having a mentor in the same building location. Additionally, teachers value having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject area; this affords beginning teachers the opportunity to collaborate regularly with other teachers and form a network of support.

In another study related to the importance of induction, Kelley (2004) described an induction model, the Partners in Education (PIE) induction program, conducted jointly between the University of Colorado and six Colorado school districts that have successfully influenced teacher effectiveness. The components of PIE included intensive mentoring, cohort group networking and ongoing inquiry to practice. Teachers in PIE overwhelmingly reported satisfaction with the quality of mentoring received. In addition,

teachers and administrators consistently reported high levels of teacher growth during the induction period. This growth was generally attributed to the professional development embedded in the induction experience. The induction activities created a sense of efficacy as beginning teachers had an opportunity to delve below the surface features of teaching. The results of this study affirm the need for a meaningful induction experience which has a lasting effect on teacher quality and retention.

Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, and Cowan-Hathcock (2007) studied beginning teachers' perceptions of the induction program activities, assistance and support they received during the early years of their career. A cross sectional survey of third-year teachers from 14 schools systems in North Carolina was conducted. Qualitative data were collected through the use of open-ended questions. Teachers in the study reported that induction activities focused on specific aspects of teaching were more favorable than diffuse, global opportunities such as district wide orientations and workshops.

Andrews et al. (2006) reported that there were discrepancies between the strategies implemented by administration for beginning teachers and what those teachers valued or found helpful. The 222 beginning teachers surveyed reported that they valued opportunities to collaborate with other professionals and having mentors. They also expressed a need for feedback on their classroom performance in a non-evaluative way.

Induction Research in Special Education

The special education retention research shows that the work environment is important to teachers' job satisfaction and subsequent retention (Billingsley, 2004b). Administrative support, collegial support, and induction support are variables that play an integral part in maintaining a positive work environment for special educators. Research

suggests that teachers are more likely to leave teaching or indicate intent to leave in the absence of adequate support from administrators and colleagues (Billingsley, 2004a).

The notion of support has a prominent place in the literature. Of the 20 articles Billingsley (2004b) reviewed, 13 addressed the issue of support, induction, administrative and/or collegial support (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1993; Billingsley et al., 2004; Billingsley, Pyecha, Smith-Davis, Murray, & Hendricks, 1995; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995; Gersten et al., 2001; Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, 1994; Miller et al., 1999; Schnorr, 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Westling & Whitten, 1996; Whitaker, 2000). Although it is well documented that early-career teachers are at risk of leaving, Billingsley (2004b) only found two special education studies that reported specifically on the relationship between induction experiences and attrition -- Billingsley et al. (2004) and Whitaker (2000).

Whitaker (2000) investigated what beginning special education teachers perceived as effective mentoring programs and examined the impact of these programs on the beginning teachers' plans to remain in special education. For this study, 200 special educators in their first-year of teaching were randomly selected and invited to participate. The participants were mailed a questionnaire and the data were analyzed using the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient in order to examine the bivariate relationships between the continuous variables.

The study identified critical components of effective mentoring as perceived by beginning special education teachers. Of these, careful selection and matching of the mentor and beginning special education teacher was determined to be most critical. Selecting a mentor who is a special education teacher appeared to be more important than

having a mentor located at the same school site. This could be linked to the fact that beginning special education teachers look more to the experienced special education teacher for socialization into the special education culture. Although the effect size was small, perceived effectiveness of mentoring correlated with the teachers' plans to remain in special education.

Billingsley et al. (2004) presents a profile of beginning special education teachers' working conditions, induction support, and career plans using data from the Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE). This study is the first to provide a description of the characteristics of a national sample of beginning special education teachers and their perceptions of working conditions and induction support. One thousand, one hundred fifty three special educators who had five or fewer years of teaching experience were interviewed. The typical early career special education teacher respondent was a Caucasian, 29-year old woman with a Bachelor's degree, working in a suburban school district.

Most respondents in the study reported receiving informal support from their colleagues and viewed this informal support as more valuable than other forms of support. Approximately 60% of respondents participated in some type of formal mentoring program, although one third did not find this support helpful. Those who reported higher levels of induction support indicated greater job manageability and success getting through to difficult students.

Another study linking induction to the retention of special education teachers was conducted by Gehrke and McCoy (2007). Using a mixed methods design consisting of mailed questionnaires and individual interviews, these researchers reported on the

experiences of beginning special educators in districts offering a structured induction program for its beginning teachers. The participants were beginning teachers in six statewide districts partnering with a specific university to provide support for beginning teachers. The researchers asked 43 beginning special educators to respond to items related to typical concerns of special education teachers in their workplace; 10 were returned and used for the study. The researchers also conducted follow-up interviews to clarify written responses and allow the participants to expand on their original answers. Comparisons were made between the working environments of the seven participants who remained in their special education teaching positions for a second year and the three individuals who transferred into general education. None of the study's participants left the field of education at the time of data collection.

Findings of the Gehrke and McCoy study supported induction for beginning special educators. Specifically, results revealed that those who remain in their positions have a more easily accessible network of supportive persons and resources in each of their teaching environments. The majority of the respondents referred to having a supportive special education department in their building. In regards to resources and professional development, the respondents who stayed in their positions for a second year reported having adequate materials and professional development that provided needed information. Additionally, the respondents indicated that they often had the option of selecting relevant professional development activities directly related to their teaching assignment. The school environment of the seven respondents who remained in the field of special education appears to exemplify what Johnson, Birkland, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, and Peske (2001) describe as a welcoming professional culture.

Induction is a comprehensive process of sustained training and support for new teachers (Wong, 2004). Research differs on what constitutes an effective induction experience. However, most agree that induction support for beginning teachers should include a mentoring component, time for collaboration with peers, administrative support, and ongoing professional development within a professional school culture (Algozzine et al., 2007; Andrews, Gilbert & Martin, 2006; Billingsley, 2004a; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Kelley, 2004; Whitaker, 2000; White & Mason, 2006; Wong, 2004). The special education retention research shows that the work environment is important to teachers' job satisfaction and subsequent retention (Billingsley, 2004b). Administrative support, collegial support, and induction support are variables that play an integral part in maintaining a positive work environment for special educators. Research suggests that teachers are more likely to leave teaching or indicate intent to leave in the absence of adequate support from administrators and colleagues (Billingsley, 2004b).

Components of Induction Support for Beginning Teachers

Research suggests that induction programs can improve instructional effectiveness and promote a sense of satisfaction in novices, fulfill state mandates to provide induction experiences in school districts and to certify teachers, provide a way to share the culture of the school setting and district with beginning teachers, and increase retention rates (Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore, 2003). However, there is little consensus on what specific factors actually constitute "induction." Nevertheless, much of the research confirms that support for beginning teachers should include a mentoring component, time for collaboration with peers, administrative support and ongoing

professional development within a professional school culture (Billingsley, 2004a; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Whitaker, 2000; White & Mason, 2006; Wong, 2004).

Mentoring as Induction

Mentors are an important component, perhaps the most important component, of an induction program, but researchers agree it cannot be the only component (Wong, 2004). Studies have found that the quality of the mentoring component of induction is largely based on the quality of the mentor (Andrews et al., 2006). Additionally, beginning special educators report that having a mentor that also teaches in the field of special education is vital, even if the mentor is assigned to a different school site (Whitaker, 2000).

In 2004, Smith and Ingersoll examined whether first-year teachers who participated in induction activities such as mentoring were more or less likely to stay with their teaching jobs. Their sample was drawn from a cohort that included all beginning teachers in the United States. The source used was the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). About two-thirds of beginning teachers reported that they worked closely with a mentor. In fact, having a mentor in one's field appeared to be one of the most salient factors in reducing attrition; the researchers found that it reduced the risk of leaving at the end of the first year by about 30%. These results support an earlier study conducted by Whitaker (2000) that examined the impact of mentoring on beginning special educators.

Whitaker (2000) examined the components of an effective mentoring program for beginning special education teachers and the impact mentoring has on attrition. The participants for the study were 156 first-year special education teachers in South Carolina

who responded to a questionnaire that examined the frequency and perceived effectiveness of the form and content of the mentoring, the characteristics of the mentor, and the teachers' plans to remain in special education. Findings revealed that the beginning special education teachers in Whitaker's study indicated a very strong preference for mentors who are also special education teachers who teach students with the same types of disabilities over mentors who are in the same school. A school site, non-special education mentor does have advantages, such as providing emotional support, socialization into the school culture, and assistance with general teaching concerns. However, the results of this study also found that beginning teachers look more to the experienced special education teacher for socialization into the special education culture.

Research conducted by White and Mason (2006) also supports Whitaker's (2000) findings. White and Mason (2006) found that a significant proportion of the research on mentoring was conducted with general education teachers. Because special educators deal with unique concerns specific to their working conditions and roles and responsibilities, the researchers designed a study to measure the impact of mentoring on these unique and specific needs. The research was conducted at seven sites over the course of two years. Participating sites volunteered and agreed to implement the mentoring component according to guidelines developed by a national committee. The Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) *Mentoring Induction Guidelines* was used at the sites for 244 beginning special educators and 253 mentors over the course of two years. At the end of the two years, surveys were mailed out; 60% of the beginning special educators and 68% of the mentors returned the surveys. Results from the beginning special educators and mentor teacher surveys revealed that mentoring was

considered worthwhile to the beginning teachers and helped to remediate stressors associated with attrition. Mentoring effectiveness was shown to be influenced by mentor/mentee proximity, same teaching assignment, same grade level assignment, and by the level of administrative support the mentor and beginning teacher received.

Principal and Collegial Support during Induction

Research on teacher attrition consistently shows that lack of administrative support is one of the underlying causes for special educators to decide to leave teaching (Griffin, et al., 2003). In addition, beginning teachers value the support of other teachers. Collegial norms play a large role in determining teachers' productivity and satisfaction with their work (McLaughlin, 1992).

Schlichete, Yssel, and Merbler (2005) examined the extent of collegial and administrative support perceived by first-year special education teachers. Through a semi-structured script that included open-ended questions, Schlichete et al. found that strongly forged relationships and the accompanying feelings of emotional well-being are protective factors critical to retention. In fact, until the primary need of belonging has been met; first-year teachers seem to find that they do not have enough of anything else to encourage them to remain in the profession. Thus, research shows that administrators are vital in fostering positive and supportive collegial relationships.

Westling and Whitten (1996) surveyed 158 special education teachers employed in primarily rural areas. The teachers were asked to report their short and long term plans to remain in or leave their current positions, and their experiences, views and attitudes toward their current working conditions potentially related to their plans. The typical respondent was a white married woman certified for her teaching assignment. Only 57%

of the teachers surveyed reported that it was likely they would be teaching special education in five years. The researchers analyzed the data to determine the variables linked to teacher attrition. Select variables were entered into a logistic regression analysis to build a predictive model. The researchers found that teachers who stated in their surveys that they did not plan to stay in the teaching profession for more than five years presented a picture of persons who were frustrated with the system and frustrated with those in the system who are perceived to affect their professional lives, primarily administrators.

Brock and Grady (1998) examined the perceptions of principals and beginning teachers regarding problems, role expectations and assistance in the first year of teaching. These researchers mailed questionnaires to 75 beginning teachers starting their second year in the classroom. They also mailed a questionnaire to 75 elementary and high school principals. In addition, these researchers interviewed nine teachers participating in a university course for beginning teachers.

The beginning teachers and principals in the Brock and Grady study were in agreement on several issues --the nature of the first-year teachers' problems, the importance of orientation, and the helpfulness of mentors. However, the beginning teachers clearly identified another important factor: the importance of the principal's role in the induction process. As the instructional leader of the school, principals are instrumental in setting the expectations for teaching and learning. The researchers found that if principals do not share their expectations or affirm the beginning teachers' efforts, they feel abandoned and frustrated.

The importance of the principal's role in sustaining effective instruction through support of beginning teachers is further supported by Angelle (2006). For this study, 19 beginning teachers from 4 middle schools and their supervising principals were interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit information regarding the school's induction process and the role of the principal in this process.

Findings revealed that what new teachers learn from an organization socialize the beginner into the school's culture, but does not necessarily serve to socialize the beginning teacher into becoming an effective teacher. Teachers in schools where the administration encouraged an environment of high expectations for students and a belief that all students can achieve, molded beginning teachers into loyal, effective teachers with a strong desire to remain in the profession. The results show that a teacher's desire to remain in teaching was partly due to the school culture encountered at his or her first school site.

Angelle (2006) affirmed Brock and Grady's (1998) earlier conclusion that the principal is a crucial component in the initial experience of new teachers: "From teacher selection to the promotion of effective instructional strategies, the principal is key in the socialization process" (p. 330). What new teachers need is sustained, school-based professional development guided by expert colleagues (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). As shown in this review, principals and teacher leaders have the largest roles to play in fostering such experiences.

Professional Development and Teacher Induction

Anderson and Olsen (2006) investigated early career urban teachers' perspectives on and experiences in professional development. They sought beginning teachers'

perspectives on the kinds of professional development they are offered, take part in, and desire, as well as how professional development shaped their attitudes about their work and their professional futures. Fifteen participants were selected through a stratified, random sampling, and then interviewed. The participants were unique in that they were specially trained, early career teachers who had demonstrated a commitment to urban education through their decision to attend and complete a program that explicitly prepared and placed them in urban, high poverty schools. The two-hour, semi-structured interviews were conducted at three points during a school year. A series of classroom observations was also conducted.

The findings of the Anderson and Olsen study reported that there are four basic variables underlying teachers' early career needs. Beginning teachers have specific developmental needs. These needs encompass basic survival support. The teachers expressed a desire for more mentoring and more opportunities to observe and be observed by other teachers to fulfill this need. Second, teachers have needs according to workplace contexts. Workplace features influence how teachers thought about and engaged in professional development. Additionally, the specific, individual workplace needs guided what professional development the teachers wanted and the degree to which they were willing and able to participate in existing opportunities. The third complexity was connecting and collaborating with like-minded peers within and across schools. Beginning teachers expressed a desire for opportunities to meet, dialogue with, and collaborate with other educators concerned with similar issues. Finally, teachers expressed needs related to experimenting with new professional roles and responsibilities

in education. Taking on additional roles in the school is the first step to developing leadership roles within it.

Cherubini (2007) explored the perceptions of beginning teachers in Ontario participating in exemplary induction programs. The researchers purposefully selected to study these induction programs due to their comprehensive services as identified in the research literature. One hundred seventy three beginning teachers from two school boards took part in this study. The teachers reported that the induction programs exceeded their expectations. Most beginning teachers reported that the school board and schools' administrations were making a long-term investment in beginning teachers' careers by providing a professional development service that encouraged and practiced collaboration among all staff. However, the teachers reported an area where they felt the induction program had faltered: the staff development topics and activities were not aligned with their pedagogical and professional needs. Basically, there was a disconnect between the professional development they needed and the in-service that was provided. These findings support those of Andrews et al. (2006) and suggest that a measure of success for teacher induction is instilling a professional trust in beginning teachers that they are capable of initiating and self-directing their professional development.

A program that takes its new teachers' developmental needs into consideration when designing professional development is Great Beginnings, a yearlong induction program in a Midwestern school district. Nielsen, Barry, and Addison (2007) assessed the effectiveness of Great Beginnings through two surveys of 826 beginning general and special education teachers over three years. The objectives of the surveys were to monitor program effectiveness and teacher satisfaction with the induction program. The midyear

survey consisted of open-ended questions related to training, support from the instructional resource teacher, instructional coach and mentor, beginning teacher needs/concerns, and suggestions. The end-of-year survey targeted challenges and support. A constant comparative method was used to analyze the data which allowed for comparisons within and across groups. The findings indicated that teachers repeatedly noted the importance of collaborating with others during the professional development sessions and that professional development sessions were planned with the new teachers' needs in mind.

Summary

The field of special education is facing the monumental task of keeping new, quality special education teachers from leaving the classroom. Special education teachers are similar to their general education peers in the reasons they report for burnout (Kilgore et al., 2003). However, the research reveals significant differences unique to the special education professional, such as large caseloads with students exhibiting a wide variety of disabling conditions at various age levels, lack of resources for the large diversity of student needs, segregation from the general education community, and professional development that is not aligned with the needs of special educators.

The concept of socialization, the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role, is vital for the retention of quality special educators. The period in which teachers enter an organization is one of the most critical periods in their careers because this is the time when novices determine the nature of the new organization and whether or not they fit (Kammeyer-Mueller, & Wanberg, 2003). Research on teacher socialization finds that: (a) there is a

strong need for community and collegial support, (b) the socialization process will occur naturally regardless of a structured, organized program, and (c) a positive socialization experience brought about from an effective induction program will reduce turnover and increase a special education teacher's desire to stay in the profession.

The special education retention research shows that the work environment is important to teachers' job satisfaction and subsequent retention. Administrative support, collegial support and induction support are variables that play an integral part in maintaining a positive work environment for special educators. Research suggests that teachers are more likely to leave teaching or indicate intent to leave in the absence of adequate support from administrators and colleagues (Billingsley, 2004).

Additionally, induction programs can improve instructional effectiveness and promote a sense of satisfaction in early career teachers, fulfill state mandates to provide induction experiences in school districts and to certify teachers, provide a way to share the culture of the school setting and district with beginning teachers, and increase retention rates (Griffin et al. 2003). However, there is little consensus on what specific factors actually constitute "induction". Nevertheless, much of the research shows that support for beginning teachers should include a mentoring component, time for collaboration with peers, administrative support and ongoing professional development within a professional school culture (Billingsley, 2004a; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Whitaker, 2000; White & Mason, 2006; Wong, 2004).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

In this chapter, the researcher provides a review of the methods used to examine the research questions for this study. This chapter begins with a review of the research questions, followed by information about the participants in the study, setting, variables, materials, the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was utilized to examine the perceptions of early career special educators regarding the components of induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their long-term retention in the classroom and their development as a quality teacher. The components of induction that were analyzed include mentoring, administrative support, collegial support, and professional development. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main points addressed in the chapter.

Research Questions

The literature reviewed in the previous chapter establishes teacher attrition as a problem that negatively impacts student achievement. Teachers leave the profession at alarming rates, and the problem is most acute in special education. Most of the research on teacher retention focuses on general education teachers or the teaching profession as a whole. Existing literature informs us that beginning teachers' socialization influences retention and how they engage in their work. However, research specific to how special education teachers experience their induction is limited. Billingsley (2004b) notes that few studies in the extant literature address problems within the special education teacher's work setting or how early positive and negative teaching experiences contribute

to special education teachers' career decisions. Therefore, this study examined early career special education teachers' perceptions about the components of induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their retention and development as a quality teacher. More specifically, the research questions are:

1. How do early career special education teachers perceive the level of induction support they received during their first years of teaching?
    a. What types of induction support did early career special education teachers receive at their school site?
    b. What types of induction support do early career special education teachers perceive as most valuable to their development?
2. What are the similarities or differences in perceptions about induction support between early career special education teachers who plan to remain in the special education profession and those who plan to leave the special education profession?
3. How does the perceived level of induction support received by early career special education teachers influence their views about (a) their work, (b) student achievement and (c) their professional futures?

This study seeks answers to the questions specifically as they relate to early career special education teachers working in Miami Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS), an urban school district with a high racial/ethnic minority population. For this study, early career special education teacher is defined as a special education teacher with less than five years teaching experience in special education. The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine and analyze early career special education teachers' perceptions, attitudes,

and beliefs about induction. In addition, the study examined the extent to which early career special education teachers' perceptions impacts their intent or desire to remain in special education. Teacher socialization is used as a lens for these examinations.

This study adds to and builds upon the existing body of literature by addressing early career special education teachers' perceptions of the induction process through the use of mixed methods inquiry. The findings of the study benefit policymakers, administrators, support providers, as well as early career teachers by providing information that could lead to program improvements or changes to better support and meet the specific and unique needs of early career special education teachers, which is a fundamental objective of induction.

Research Design

In this study, the researcher applied a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. This section includes a discussion of the rationale for selecting this design and a discussion of the components of the design.

Rationale for Selecting a Mixed-Methods Design

The study examined the views of early career special education teachers regarding the induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their retention and development as a quality teacher. A mixed-methods approach was used to analyze data and give a voice to early career special education teachers. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) formally define mixed-methods research as the "class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (p. 17). The mixed-methods design includes a collection of quantitative and qualitative data

for the purpose of developing "a rich and comprehensive" understanding of the organizational factors that are associated with special education teacher retention and development in the early years of teaching (Creswell, 2002, p.182). The mixed-methods research design encourages researchers to collect multiple sets of data using different strategies, approaches and methods in such a way that the combination results in complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (Johnson & Turner, 2003). The rationale for integrating quantitative and qualitative data within the study is based on the fact that neither method in isolation is able to fully examine the research questions. The qualitative strand of the study serves to expand the answers obtained from the quantitative strand, thus providing a robust analysis.

Phases of the Study

The mixed-methods sequential explanatory design consists of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative. This study involved collecting qualitative data after a quantitative phase in order to explain or follow up the quantitative data in more depth. In the quantitative phase of the study, a survey instrument collected data from early career special education teachers in Miami-Date County to develop an understanding of the induction components received by these teachers at their school site and the value the teachers place on the components. The qualitative phase was conducted in order to obtain rich and meaningful descriptions of induction as experienced by early career special education teachers. In this follow-up, the induction experience was explored with six participants. The reason for this second phase was to build upon the initial qualitative results.

Quantitative phase. The roles of special education teachers differ from those of most general educators. For this reason and because of the wide variety of methods and routes by which new teachers enter the special education profession, the "one size fits all" approach to induction may not be the best way to meet the needs of all beginning teachers. Moreover, special education teachers are in the best position to provide precise information on what types of support are essential to their success. Examining induction support components to identify the most valued would be beneficial in helping school site administrators prioritize their efforts to support early career special educators.

A survey of early career special educators was used in the quantitative phase of the study. Survey data was analyzed using the software program, Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical analysis of the data collected included descriptive statistics. Descriptive research is the appropriate method of data construction for investigating data based on participants' views (Creswell, 2002).

The first research question, How do early career special education teachers perceive the level of induction support they received during their first years of teaching?, required no hypothesis testing. A rank ordered list was developed and descriptive statistics were used to respond to this question.

Because induction support has been identified as a major influence in the lives of beginning special education teachers, this research explored early career special education teachers' perceptions of their induction experiences – specifically how induction affects teachers' intent to remain in the profession of special education. An ex post facto research design was chosen to inform the second research question¸ what are the similarities or differences in perceptions about induction support between early career

special education teachers who plan to remain in the special education profession and those who plan to leave the special education profession? Independent *t*-tests were conducted in order to test the significance of the difference of level of satisfaction with the induction experience between the means of early career special education teachers who indicated a desire to stay in the profession after three years and those that indicated a desire to leave. In addition, a discriminant analysis was conducted to determine whether a relationship exists between special education teachers' intent to remain in the field of special education and special education teachers' perceived value of induction components experienced at their school site.

Qualitative phase. The second phase of the study is qualitative in nature. This phase informs the third research question, how does the perceived level of induction support received by the early career special education teacher influence their views about their work, student achievement and their professional futures? The third research question explored early career special education teachers' perceptions of induction supports more thoroughly. Using qualitative interviewing techniques, the researcher sought to gain a depth of understanding about how early career special education teachers experience induction during the first years of their teaching career.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews. Through the interview process, the researcher can develop insights about past events, as well as the values and interests of the respondents (Creswell, 2002). Qualitative research methodology is appropriate given the researcher's goal to explore special education teacher's perspectives about their induction experience and the support provided within their environment (Merriam, 1998). Interviews allow the researcher to construct more in-depth

information about teachers' perceptions. Open-ended interviews augment quantitative data by providing contextual data that can be constructed by speaking with the participants. Since teaching occurs within a social environment, it is important to understand the socialization process an early career special education teacher encounters and the influence the induction process has on a teacher's development as a quality educator (Pugach, 1992). The conclusions based on the qualitative data and their analysis explain and elaborate the statistical results by exploring the participants' views by providing elaboration, enhancement, illustration and clarification of the results from the first phase of study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzzie, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The final inferences are based on both phases of the study.

In summary, the researcher studied the perceptions of early career special education teachers in MDCPS regarding teacher induction program components received at their schools. The research was conducted in two phases, first through a survey of all identified early career special education teachers which allowed the researcher to efficiently gather specific data from this pre-determined target group, then through an interview process with six early career special education teachers.

Setting

Data for this study were constructed from early career special education teachers employed by MDCPS. Miami-Dade County houses the fourth largest school district (MDCPS, 2009) encompassing the largest proportion of ethnic/racial minorities among the nation's 25 most populous counties (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The MDCPS statistical analysis report (MDCPS, 2009) shows the following student demographics: 62% Hispanic, 26.3% Black, 9.2% White of Non-Hispanic origin, 1.3% multiracial, and

<2% Asian Pacific Islander/American Indian/ Alaskan Native. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), over 17% of families with children under the age of 18 live in poverty, making Miami one of the poorest, large cities in the United States. MDCPS averages approximately 64% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, with 70% of the Black students and 61% of Hispanic students meeting eligibility for free or reduced lunch (MDCPS, 2009).

Each year MDCPS has an influx of beginning teachers for positions in special education. As research has demonstrated, many of these teachers will not remain in the field of special education beyond three years. MDCPS reports several structures to support beginning teachers and promote their success. Accordingly, the district offers a three year comprehensive induction program to support the various levels of experience and education of the new teachers to the district. This program is called Mentoring and Induction for New Teachers (MINT). MINT was "designed to support the practice of new teachers, to create an awareness of professional responsibilities and ultimately, positively affect student learning. In addition to providing support to beginning teachers, the induction program provides opportunities for mentors and teachers to reflect upon practice in order to improve the quality of education, thus elevating the teaching profession and fostering a collaborative learning community for all educators" (MDCPS, 2012, para. 1).

New teachers begin the induction process by participating in a mandatory new teacher orientation sponsored by the office of Professional Development in MDCPS in collaboration with the United Teachers of Dade (UTD). Additionally, teachers new to the profession in permanent instructional positions are provided with an assigned certified

MINT mentor, two days of substitute coverage to facilitate in-class observations of veteran teachers by the new teacher, onsite mentoring support by MDCPS Beginning Teacher Program staff members, and online mentoring support. In lieu of an official MINT mentor, teachers in their second and third year of teaching are assigned a buddy teacher at their school site location who occupies a leadership role.

Participants

The participants included all early career special education teachers employed by MDCPS as of the 2009-2010 school year. This section includes a description of the participants, and the procedures for selecting them.

The Quantitative Phase

The projected subjects for this study consisted of all special education teachers within their first five years as a professional teacher providing instruction to students with disabilities in Pre-Kindergarten through the 12th grade within the MDCPS system. All teachers who fit the profile were targeted for Phase I of the study. MDCPS currently employs approximately 22,393 teachers at 392 school sites serving about 347,774 students. There are roughly 55,037 students served in special education programs and 3,850 teachers who work primarily with students identified with disabilities (MDCPS, 2009).

A special education teacher in MDCPS is defined as a teacher who teaches at the elementary, middle or high school level, whose primary teaching assignment is providing direct instruction and/or consultation services to students identified with disabilities within a self-contained classroom, resource room, or general education classroom. This is a professional position responsible for the instruction of students with mild to severe

disabilities through the teaching of basic and functional academics, content areas, and social and motor skills.

Following approval of the proposal by the dissertation committee, the Florida International University Institutional Review Board, and the MDCPS Institutional Review Board, the researcher contacted Miami Dade County Public Schools office of Community Development and Public Outreach to submit a public records request for a listing of all early career special education teachers with less than five years teaching experience. The survey was sent to the teachers who met this criterion.

The Qualitative Phase

The second phase of the study included semi-structured interviews of six teachers from the survey population. Purposeful sampling was employed in the selection of the early career special education teachers targeted for the interviews. Based on the responses obtained during phase one of the study, the researcher identified six participants who agreed to be contacted for the follow-up interviews. The participants were chosen from the early career special education teachers who indicated on their survey that they plan to remain as special education teachers for the next three years (question #10). This subset was chosen in order to obtain more in-depth and robust perspectives on the factors that contribute to special education teachers remaining in their field.

There are no specific rules or guidelines to determine the sample size for studies that are not based on probability or other quantitative measures (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Purposive samples are the most commonly used form of non-probabilistic sampling and their size typically relies on the concept of saturation, or point at which no new themes are observed in the data. Basic elements for major themes are

usually present as early as six interviews, and saturation can occur within the first 12 (Guest et al., 2006). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) report that case studies often range from approximately six to 24 cases depending on the size, design and evolution of the study. Therefore, the qualitative phase of the proposed study consisted of six participants. If saturation had not been reached after interviewing six early career special education teachers, additional participants would have been interviewed. Saturation was determined when themes in the data begin to repeat or overlap and no new information was generated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002; Guest et al., 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Table 1 provides a description of the interview participants.

Table 1

Description of Interview Participants

Participant	Certification Route	Grade Level	Primary Disability Taught	Primary Teaching Assignment
Adi	Alternate	Elementary	Autism / Intellectual Dis.	Self-Contained Classroom
Char	Traditional	High School	Autism	Self-Contained Classroom
Isabella	Traditional	Middle School	Varying Excep	Co-Teaching and VE Classroom
Martha	Traditional	Middle School	Varying Excep	Co-Teaching and VE Classroom
Mary	Alternate	Elementary	Varying Excep	Co-Teaching
Spartan	Alternate	High School	Varying Excep	Co-Teaching and VE Classroom

Data Collection

This section describes the procedures to collect the data. It begins with a discussion of the survey instrument and the procedures that were employed to collect the quantitative data, including the procedures used to conduct the pilot test of the survey

instrument. This is followed by a discussion of the interview protocol and the procedures to collect the qualitative data.

Survey

A survey was used to collect data on the perceptions of early career special education teachers regarding the induction components received during their first few years of teaching. Survey questions were developed by obtaining a list of induction support elements from induction literature on beginning teachers' needs and teacher induction. The survey was critiqued by expert judges to obtain estimates of validity. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted to obtain estimates of reliability. The survey was revised based on the recommendations of the expert judges and results of the pilot test.

Content validity. The content of the survey was developed by the researcher based on the review of literature and CEC's Mentoring Induction Principles and Guidelines (White & Mason, 2006). The review of literature was used to identify the various induction components utilized by school-site administrators and mentors to support beginning teachers. CEC's Mentoring Induction Principles and Guidelines (White & Mason, 2006) was used to identify specific support strategies utilized for beginning special education teachers. The themes that were identified -- mentoring, administrative support, peer/collegial support, and professional development, -- were developed into survey items. In order to estimate the validity of the survey instrument, a panel of five experts was consulted. The experts included two administrators, and three special education department leaders. Each expert had over 15 years of teaching experience in the field of special education. Expert judge validity was determined since

all experts agreed that the items included were appropriate induction components used to support beginning special education teachers.

Pilot test. A pilot test of the survey was administered to 10 expert, veteran special education teachers. The pilot study was used to determine approximate completion time of the survey, ambiguous or confusing wording, item applicability, and suggestions for revision. Each expert in the pilot study provided feedback to refine and clarify the survey instrument items. The results were used to revise the survey instrument for clarity and relevance before final distribution to study participants.

Reliability was determined by computing the internal consistency of the induction support components included on the survey. Internal consistency refers to the degree of interrelatedness among the items of the survey (Schmitt, 1996), and grouped interrelated items form what is known as a scale. Cronbach's Alpha yields information about the extent to which each item in a set of items correlates with at least one other item in the set (Cortina, 1993). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. However, there is no lower limit to the coefficient. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). A reliability coefficient alpha of .70 or greater is generally considered an acceptable score of a scales' internal consistency (Cortina, 1993; Schmitt, 1996). For the current research, the items that yielded alpha coefficients of .70 or greater were used in the survey.

Survey instrument. The survey investigated early career teachers' perceptions of their induction program support. It is divided into two parts. The first part of the instrument was used to collect demographic information about the teacher and his or her

work environment, including gender, race/ethnicity, number of years teaching, school level taught, primary teaching assignment, teacher preparation, educational level, ESOL endorsement and the school grade.

Additionally, part one of the survey instrument included three questions related to the general perceptions of the early career special education teacher in relation to his or her overall induction assistance and development as an effective teacher. The first question addressed the early career teacher's intent to remain in the special education profession. The teacher was asked to respond to the sentence stem "*In three years, I see myself…*" either "*As a special education teacher*" or "*no longer in the profession of special education.*" A value of 1 will be used for the response "As a special education teacher" and a value of 2 will be used for the response "No longer in the profession of special education." The second question asked the participants to rate their level of satisfaction with the induction support they received at their school site by responding to the statements using the following Likert scale: 1 = Not Satisfied, 2 = Somewhat Satisfied, 3 =Satisfied, 4 = Very Satisfied. Finally, the participants were asked to respond to a statement regarding teacher efficacy using the Likert scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree. A listing of the three statements is found in Table 2.

Table 2

General Perceptions: Early Career Special Education Teacher

1.	In three years, I see myself…
2.	Overall, how satisfied are you that the support you received during the first few years of your teaching career helped you develop into an effective special education teacher?
3.	I feel confident in my ability to teacher students with disabilities.

In the second part of the survey instrument, participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire divided into four sections representing induction support: mentoring, administrative support, collegial support, and professional development. The items included in the four sections have been identified as valuable strategies that support early career teachers in the induction phase of their careers. Participants were asked to respond to several statements regarding specific induction activities in order to identify whether or not the strategy had been provided for them by answering "yes" or "no". Following identification of the strategy, the participants were asked to rate the value of each of the strategies by using the following Likert scale: 1= Absolutely No Value, 2 = Little Value, 3 = Valuable, and 4 = Extremely Valuable.

Section 1 of the survey contains eight statements cited by researchers as effective practices for mentors during beginning teacher induction. The mentor teacher guides, assists, and supports the beginning special education teacher during the crucial first years of teaching. A listing of the eight mentoring activities is found in Table 3.

Table 3

Mentoring Activities

My mentor…

- Provided support and guidance in the areas of planning and instruction
- Helped me acclimate to the culture of the school and community
- Was available for regularly scheduled observations
- Provided post-observation feedback on my progress in instructional techniques in a timely manner
- Modeled appropriate instructional techniques
- Maintained a professional and confidential relationship based on responsibility and trust
- Was accessible and willing to devote time and energy to assist me
- Provided assistance with special education compliance issues (IEP, paperwork, etc…)

Section 2 contains seven statements found in the literature as effective support provided by the school site administrator. The building administrator is an integral part in the induction of beginning special education teachers. Building administrators demonstrate support, understanding, and encouragement for mentoring and induction at the school site. A listing of the seven statements regarding administrative support is found in Table 4.

Table 4

Administrative Support

My administrator
• Provided release time for me to observe other teachers
• Provided release time for me teachers to meet with my mentor
• Provided release time for me to attend training sessions
• Assigned a special education mentor for me in the same grade level / subject area
• Reduced my extra-curricular activities (bus duty, lunch duty, committee participation, etc.)
• Demonstrated support, understanding and encouragement
• Supported me in discipline matters

Section 3 contains six statements found in the literature as effective support provided by colleagues/peers. Billingsley et al. (2004) found that beginning teachers are more likely to find the support they receive from other colleagues more helpful than other supports. A listing of the six statements regarding school site colleagues' support is found in Table 5.

Table 5

Colleague/Peer Support

My colleagues/peers…
• Support and respect my work as a special education teacher
• Participated in informal meetings of groups of new teachers for peer support
• Allowed me to observe them teaching
• Provided constructive feedback on non-evaluative classroom observations

• Provided assistance/support to assist me in dealing with stressors encountered during my first years teaching • Have a great deal of cooperative effort among each other

Section 4 contains four statements found in the literature as best practices used in professional development activities for early career teachers. A listing of the four statements regarding professional development is found in Table 6.

Table 6

Professional Development Activities

My professional development activities included…
• An orientation session for new teachers prior to the school year beginning • Special sessions aimed at assisting beginning teachers at my school site during the school year • School wide, mandatory professional development sessions for all teachers which promoted collaboration among all teachers • School wide, professional development that was meaningful and relevant to special education issues

Quantitative Data Collection Procedures

Eighty seven early career special education teachers who were in their first through fifth year of teaching were surveyed. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data in response to the following research questions: How do early career special education teachers perceive the level of induction support they have received during their first years of teaching, and what are the similarities or differences in perceptions about induction support between early career special education teacher who plan to remain in the special education profession and those who plan to leave the special education profession?

The researcher sent the early career special education teachers an introductory E-mail explaining the purpose of the study and inviting them to participate and complete the

survey via an online survey instrument. The introductory E-mail provided a brief description of the study, assurance of confidentiality, and expectations for the participant and researcher. Researcher and university contact information was provided in the E-mail. A link to the online survey was also included. The surveys were conducted electronically through an online survey instrument. A follow-up E-mail was sent 2 weeks later to all early career special education teachers encouraging them to complete the survey in order to increase the rate of response. A final reminder email was sent 7 days later. Four hundred four early career special education teachers were identified though the initial records request. Upon further review, the list was found to include several other professionals working with student with disabilities (i.e., physical therapists, occupational therapists, etc.). Once the researcher removed these professionals from the list, 273 names remained. The surveys were sent to the 273 identified special education teachers with less than five years teaching experience.

Completed online surveys were kept confidentially and coded for the sole purpose of counting and tracking. The survey instrument included a question asking if the participant was willing to be contacted in order to complete a follow-up interview. Participants who offered to participate in the second phase of the study were asked to provide contact information for the researcher.

Interview Questions

Semi-structured interviews with selected early career special education teachers were conducted in order to give the population being investigated a voice. The early career special education teacher interviews provided rich, in-depth descriptions of induction supports the teachers experienced and found to be of value.

The interviews were semi-structured and guided by a series of open-ended questions and follow up probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview process allowed the researcher to gather contextual information (Creswell, 2002). To promote successful interview sessions, probing questions were developed beforehand to assist in managing the conversation while interviewing. The function of these probes was to potentially assist the participants in expanding their answers or, when necessary, to steer conversation back to the topic being discussed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The interview questions were generated from the responses obtained during the quantitative phase of this study. The induction experiences of the early career special education teachers helped guide the researcher in formulating the questions for the qualitative phase of the study. Due to the nature of the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the interview protocol was constructed as the researcher analyzed the quantitative data. However, the researcher found it prudent to have an outline to guide her in the creation of the interview protocol.

Each early career teacher interview consisted of three sections. The first section was utilized as a warm-up section and included general questions about the participants' experience as a special education teacher, their teaching assignment, if their teaching experience has been what they expected, and their role as a special education teacher in the context of their school. The purpose of this section was to establish rapport with the early career teacher.

The second section of the interview focused on the socialization and induction components experienced by the early career special education teacher. These questions were geared toward understanding the early career teacher's overall socialization and

induction experience. This included questions about the induction components that have contributed to their success as a special educator at their school site (administrative support, collegiality, mentor support and professional development activities)

The third section of the interview focused on stressors unique to special education teachers (e.g., understanding IDEA, special education forms, developing modifications, and individualizing instruction based on the IEP). Questions concentrated on the manner in which induction support helped resolve each stressor experienced by the early career special education teacher. The researcher concluded the interview process by asking the interviewee for any additional or final thoughts and asking for any questions the interviewee may have for the researcher. The researcher used the following interview questions:

1. Tell me about your experience as a special educator.
   Probes: Has teaching in the field of special education been what you expected?
   What is working for you in this setting?
   Describe your teaching assignment.
   What is it like to be a special education teacher in your school?

2. What factors in your school have contributed to your success as a special education teacher?
   Probes: What role does the principal play in supporting early career special education teachers?
   How would you describe the collegial support you received as a new teacher.
   Describe your relationship with your mentor.
   How has the staff development been beneficial/supportive of your needs?
   How can the staff development/professional development be improved to better meet your needs as a special educator?
   Are there any other supports in place to assist you as a early career teacher?

3. When you have a question or concern, how do you resolve it?
   Probes: How did you acquire knowledge regarding special education policies and procedures (IEP, referral, testing, accommodations, modifications, alternative assessments, etc.)?
   Who helps you with discipline concerns?

4. What factors contribute to your decision to continue teaching special education at the same school?
5. What are your future plans concerning remaining at your school site and the special education profession?

Qualitative Data Collection Procedures

The researcher contacted each participant and selected a meeting date/time for the follow-up interviews to take place. The researcher traveled to each participant's school site for the interviews. One interview was conducted at Florida International University at the request of the participant. Each interview consisted of open-ended questions and lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and used a responsive interview approach, which means that throughout the interview the researcher sought particular information and gently guided the discussion, leading it through stages, asking focused questions and encouraging the participant to answer in depth and at length (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interviews were guided by themes as presented through open-ended questions. As the interviewer collected data, concepts and themes continuously emerged, were recognized and analyzed. The interviewer modified questions in order to acquire more details on what the concepts and themes meant, obtain examples or narratives of each and explore how the themes and concepts were related (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The flow of the interviews was based on responses from each individual participant. The interviews sought to gather rich, informative data on the various induction supports experienced by the participant at his or her school site. The

interviews added a personal perspective and story to the quantitative data collected. The interviews were recorded using a digital recording device.

Data Analysis

This section includes a discussion of the procedures to analyze the data. The section begins with a discussion of the procedures that were used to analyze the quantitative data. Procedures to analyze the qualitative data are also discussed.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey data were collected, organized and tabulated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The survey data were analyzed using multiple measures. Descriptive statistics such as graphs, measures of central tendency, measures of variability and frequency counts were obtained for demographic items. The following table illustrates the categories associated with each, as well as the numerical values assigned to each data group (see numbers in parentheses).

Table 7

Demographic Categories

Gender	Race/Ethnicity	School Level	Primary Teaching Assignment	Teacher Preparation	Educational Level	ESOL Endorsed	Gr
M (1)	African Amer. (1)	Pre-K (1)	Consult (1)	Traditional (1)	Bachelor (1)	Yes (1)	A (1)
F (2)	Asian (2)	Elem (2)	Co-Teach (2)	Alternative (2)	Masters (2)	No (2)	B (2)
	Caucasian (3)	Middle (3)	VE/Resource (3)		Ed. Spec. (3)		C (3)
	Hispanic (4)	High (4)	Self-Cont. (4)		Doctorate (4)		D (4)
	Native Amer. (5)		Separate Sch (5)				F (5)
	Other (6)						

Statistical descriptive analysis of the Yes/No portion of the survey instrument were conducted to identify and quantify the extent to which participating teachers perceive they received specific induction support strategies at their school site. A value of 1 was used to code “yes” responses; a value of 2 was used to code “no” responses.

Means and standard deviations were computed for the perceived effectiveness of teacher induction program components: mentoring, administrative support, collegial support and professional development from the survey items. A *t*-test for independent samples was conducted using the responses from the 4-point Likert-scale survey instrument in order to examine similarities or differences that may exist between the mean survey score of early career special education teachers who plan to remain as teachers of students with disabilities and those who do not. A discriminant analysis was also used. Tables were provided to represent these statistical data. Data analysis included numbers and percentages reflecting perceptions of early career teachers presented in a contingency table format with subsequent narratives related to observed patterns and differences. In order to control for Type 1 error, the Bonferroni method was used.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The data analysis requires "organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned…" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p.145). Moreover, the interview data may be used to triangulate data obtained through surveys and provide explanations related to previously constructed data (Creswell, 2002).

The analysis of the interview data is an inductive process that moves from raw data, to initial broad categories, to refined and specific coding, and finally to construction of the whole picture (Merriam, 1998). In analyzing the interview data, a constant comparison method was used. The first step in analyzing the qualitative data was to transcribe the interviews verbatim. Following the transcription, the researcher read the transcripts to identify patterns, themes, and categories of analysis that emerged from the

data. The responses to the interviews were coded using colored pencils and sorted into categories relevant to the studies purpose (Merriam, 1998). The researcher moved back and forth between the logical construction and the actual data in a search for meaningful patterns that evolve from the study of specific pieces of information that the researcher has collected (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In addition, the researcher compared different pieces of data, refined categories and moved on to a higher conceptual level (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

To establish the trustworthiness of the study, member checks were used. After the interviews were conducted, the transcripts were shared with the participating early career special educators. Through the member checks, the researcher clarified and/or confirmed the data. Additionally, member checks assisted the researcher in accurately conveying the participants' perspectives and that the participants concur with the themes that emerged.

Summary

A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was utilized to examine the perceptions of early career special educators' regarding the components of induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their long-term retention in the classroom and their development as a quality teacher.

The participants were early career special education teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience in the MDCPS system during the 2009-2010 school year. Teachers were contacted via E-mail and invited to participate by completing an online survey. Additionally, six teachers were selected for follow-up interviews to take place at a location convenient to them. Participation in any stage of this study was voluntary.

A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was chosen to complete the study in order to analyze the data and give a voice to the early career special education teachers. The mixed-methods sequential explanatory design consisted of two distinct phases. The first phase of the study involved quantitative methods via a survey. The second phase of the research study was qualitative in nature and involved the interview of six early career special education teachers.

The survey data were analyzed using SPSS to obtain descriptive statistics. Descriptive analyses included percentages, frequencies, and measures of central tendency. In addition, *t* tests and a discriminant analysis were conducted using the responses from the 4-point Likert-scale survey instrument in order to examine similarities or differences that may exist between the mean survey score of early career special education teachers who plan to remain as teachers of students with disabilities and those who do not. The second phase of the study included transcribing and analyzing data from the six interviews. The data provided elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification from the first section. Collectively, the data were analyzed to reveal the perceptions of early career special education teachers regarding the induction supports they received and the overall perceived effectiveness of the induction components on their development as a quality teacher. The final inferences were based on both phases of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter contains the results of the analysis of data collected during the 2009-2010 school year from early career special education teachers employed by Miami Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS). The participants in the study responded to a survey requesting information regarding their perceptions about the induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their retention and development as a quality teacher. To obtain teachers' views, 273 eligible Special Education teachers with less than five years teaching experience were invited to take the survey. Of these, there were 87 usable surveys, resulting in a 32% response rate. In addition, six teachers participated in follow-up interviews to add richness and depth to the study.

The research questions in this study were:

1. How do early career special education teachers perceive the level of induction support they received during their first years of teaching?
    a. What types of induction support did early career special education teachers receive at their school site?
    b. What types of induction support do early career special education teachers perceive as most valuable to their development as a quality teacher?
2. What are the similarities or differences in perceptions about induction support between early career special education teacher who plan to remain in the special education profession and those who plan to leave the special education profession?

3. How does the perceived level of induction support received by early career special education teachers influence their views about (a) their work, (b) student achievement and (c) their professional futures?

Chapter 4 is organized into three sections. Section I provides a description of the study sample used to collect data during the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. The demographic section of the survey is also described in this section. Descriptive statistical analyses, frequency rates and measures of central tendency were calculated for these data. Section II addresses phase one of the study, research questions one and two, and includes the quantitative analysis of survey responses. The final section addresses phase two, question three, and includes the qualitative analysis of the responses obtained during the follow up, in-depth interviews.

Description of Study Sample

Quantitative Phase

Early career special education teachers were identified as teachers with five years or less teaching experience whose primary teaching responsibility included providing specially designed instruction to students with disabilities. A total of 273 surveys were sent to eligible participants, as identified from a database provided from a MDCPS' public records request. Of those, 87 usable surveys were returned, representing approximately 32% of all eligible participants.

Part 1 of the survey was comprised of eight demographic questions. Respondents were asked to provide information in the categories of gender, race, years of teaching experience, grade level currently teaching, primary teaching assignment, teacher preparation program, educational level, ESOL endorsement and school site grade.

Additionally, the participants were asked to respond to three questions about their general perception of the induction experience they received at their school site and how these experiences affected their development as an effective special education teacher.

Table 8 shows that a high number of respondents were women (80.5%). Men comprised 19.5% of the survey study. Forty six percent of the participants who participated identified themselves as Hispanic. Other ethnic categories included African American - not of Hispanic origin (27.6%), White – not of Hispanic origin (20.7%), and 5.7% of respondents identified themselves as "Other." There were no participants who self-identified as Asian or Native American.

Table 8

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Female	70	80.5
Male	17	19.5
Ethnicity		
Black (not of Hispanic origin)	24	27.6
Asian or Pacific Islander	0	0
Hispanic / Latino	40	46
Native American	0	0
White (not of Hispanic origin)	18	20.7
Other	5	5.7

Teachers were asked to respond to questions regarding the characteristics of their school site. They were asked the number of years they had been teaching, the current grade level they were teaching (elementary, middle school, or high school), their primary teaching assignment (Varying Exceptionalities/Resource room, co-teaching in an inclusion classroom, self-contained special education classroom, consultation teacher or other), whether they had ESOL certification, and their school's grade based on the

Florida Department of Education School Accountability Report (A-F). Table 9 summarizes the general characteristics of the respondents' school site.

Table 9

General Characteristics of Respondents' School Site

School Site General Characteristics	N	%
Years of Teaching Experience		
<1	1	1.1
1	1	1.1
2	2	2.3
3	9	10.3
4	37	42.5
5	37	42.5
Teaching Assignment – Grade Level		
Pre-K	11	12.6
Elementary	44	50.6
Middle School	14	16.1
High School	18	20.7
Teaching Assignment - Classroom		
Consultation Teacher	2	2.3
Co-Teacher	20	23
VE/Resource Room Teacher	27	31
Self-Contained classroom teacher	20	23
Other	18	20.7
ESOL Endorsement		
Yes	56	64.4
No	31	35.6
School Site Grade		
A	38	43.7
B	10	11.5
C	21	24.1
D	15	17.2
F	3	3.4

Only 14.8% of the respondents had three years or less teaching experience. The majority of the respondents had four to five years teaching experience (85%). Because of reductions in educational funding by the state of Florida and financial difficulties faced by the district, employment of new teachers has steadily declined in MDCPS. For

example, instead of filling special education teaching positions with newly hired special education teachers, many general education teachers were reassigned to teach students with disabilities. In fact, during the 2009-2010 school year, there was only one newly hired special education teacher.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the grade level they are currently assigned to teach. The majority of the respondents were elementary school teachers (50.6%), followed by high school teachers (20.7%) and middle school teachers (16.1%). There were 12.6% respondents teaching Pre-kindergarten. Teachers were also asked to indicate their primary teaching assignment. The majority of the respondents were equally distributed among three categories: Varying Exceptionalities/resource room, Co-teaching in inclusion classrooms, self-contained special education classroom. The other two categories had significantly lower percentages. A high percentage of respondents indicated they held ESOL certification (64.4%).

School accountability in the state of Florida is maintained by a system that measures student progress toward achievement, graduation, and postsecondary access. The Florida Department of Education assigns a letter grade to each school in the state based on the previous school year's data. The school's grade varies from year to year and ranges from an A to an F. The results are indicative of the school's measured success towards meeting the academic needs of their students and demonstrating adequate yearly progress. During the 2009-2010 school year, almost half of the respondents (43.7%) indicated that they worked in a school designated as an "A" school, 11.5% worked at a "B" school, 24.1% of respondents worked at a "C" school, "D" schools had 17.2%, and 3.4% of the participants were from schools designated as "F" or failing.

General characteristics of respondents' teacher preparation program were also requested on the survey. The survey responses indicated that almost half of the early career special education teachers (41.4%) were certified through an alternative certification program. Respondents were also asked about their highest degree earned. Over half of the respondents (59.7%) reported that they held a degree above the Bachelor's level. A summary of the general characteristics of respondents' teacher preparation is presented in Table 10.

Table 10

General Characteristics of Respondents' Teacher Preparation

Category	N	%
Teacher Preparation Program		
Traditional 4-year University	51	58.6
Alternative Certification	36	41.4
Highest Level of Education		
Bachelor's Degree	35	40.2
Master's Degree	46	52.9
Educational Specialist Degree	5	5.7
Doctorate Degree	1	1.1

Lastly, the participants were asked to respond to three questions about their general perception of their induction experience as it related to receiving needed guidance/assistance and development as an effective teacher. The first question addressed the early career teacher's intent to remain in the field of special education. The teachers were asked to respond to the sentence stem "In three years, I see myself…" either "As a special education teacher" or "no longer in the profession of special education." The first question asked participants where they saw themselves in three years. Table 10 shows that 69% of the respondents indicated a desire to remain a special education teacher in contrast to 31% who indicated a desire to leave the profession.

Table 11

General Perceptions: Future Plans

Category	N	%
In three years, I see myself..		
As a special education teacher	60	69
Not in the profession of special education	27	31

The next two questions asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the induction support they were receiving at their school site and the confidence they have in their ability to teach students with disabilities. A summary of the participants' responses are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

General Perceptions: Mean Scores for Level of Satisfaction and Confidence

Category	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Level of Satisfaction	87	1	4	2.31	.893
Confidence in Teaching Students with Disabilities	87	1	4	3.48	.525

Only half of the respondents (58.6%) indicated satisfaction with the induction support they had received. Additionally, when the participants were asked to respond to a statement regarding teacher efficacy, "I feel confident in my ability to teach students with disabilities", all but one respondent indicated Strongly Agree or Agree. Overall, early career special education teachers felt confident in their abilities; however, this confidence may not be the result of the teacher's induction experience. Nearly half (41.4%) of the respondents did not feel satisfied with their induction experience. A summary of the participants' responses are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

General Perceptions: Summary of Level of Satisfaction and Confidence

Category	N	%
Level of satisfaction		
Very Satisfied	17	19.5
Satisfied	34	39.1
Somewhat Satisfied	28	32.2
Not Satisfied	8	9.2
Confidence in ability to teach special education		
Strongly Agree	43	49.4
Agree	43	49.4
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	1	1.1

The Qualitative Phase

Data were collected from six early career special education teachers from different schools within the MDCPS system. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: they were early career special education teachers in their first five years of teaching, they indicated on their survey that they planned on remaining as a special education teacher and they indicated a willingness to participate in the follow up in-depth interviews. A limited number of survey respondents offered to participate in the interviews and many respondents later declined to be interviewed.

All participants worked in urban public schools that primarily serve minority Hispanic and/or Black students in Miami Dade County. Two participants taught in a high school setting, two participants taught in a middle school setting, and two participants taught in an elementary school setting. This distribution occurred by chance. Four of the participants taught in an inclusion/Varying Exceptionalities (VE) setting and two taught in a self-contained classroom. Three participants obtained a Bachelor's degree in Special Education, and three participants had Bachelor's degrees in other fields; however, one

participant in the latter group had a Master's degree in Special Education. Participants were asked to provide a pseudonym to provide confidentiality.

Phase I: Quantitative Data Analysis and Results

Research Question 1

The first research question and sub questions addressed the types of induction program activities provided by each teacher's individual school site location and the early career teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of each component. These are: how do early career special education teachers perceive the level of induction support they received during their first years of teaching? Sub questions were, what types of induction support did early career special education teachers receive at their school site? And what types of induction support do early career special education teachers perceive as most valuable to their development?

Chapter 2 of this study reviewed research that revealed commonalities within successful induction programs (Billingsley, 2004a; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Whitaker, 2000; White & Mason, 2006; Wong, 2004). The literature informed the survey included in this study and identified 25 common induction support strategies. The participants were asked to indicate whether or not the strategy had been provided for them (Yes or No). Descriptive statistics summarizing the results of the Yes or No portion of the survey are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Induction Components Experienced by Early Career Special Education Teachers

Induction Strategy	% Yes	%No
A mentor who		
Provides support and guidance in the areas of planning and instruction	63.2	36.8
Maintains a professional and confidential relationship based on responsibility and trust	62.1	37.9
Provides assistance with special education compliance issues (IEP, paperwork, instruction, etc.)	57.5	42.5
Is available for regularly scheduled observations	55.2	44.8
Is accessible and willing to devote time and energy to assist the beginning teacher	54.0	46.0
Provides post-observation feedback on the beginning teacher's progress in a timely manner	52.9	47.1
Models appropriate instructional techniques	51.7	48.3
Helps the beginning teacher acclimate to the culture of the school community	50.6	49.4
Administrators who		
Provide release time for beginning teachers to attend training sessions	77.0	23.0
Demonstrate support, understanding, and encouragement	67.8	32.2
Support beginning teachers in discipline matters	65.5	34.5
Reduce (or eliminate) extra-curricular duties	48.3	51.7
Provide release time for beginning teachers to observe other teachers	43.7	56.3
Assign a special education mentor for the special education beginning teachers in the same grade level and/or subject area	41.4	58.6
Provide release time for beginning teachers to meet with their mentor	37.9	62.1
Colleagues/Peers who		
Support and respect beginning teachers work as a special education teacher	83.9	16.1
Provide assistance/support to beginning teachers in dealing with stressors encountered during their first few years teaching	77.0	23.0
Have a great deal of cooperative effort among each other	72.4	27.6
Allow beginning teachers to observe them teaching	71.3	28.7
Provide constructive feedback on non-evaluative classroom observations	59.8	40.2
Participate in information meetings for groups of new teachers to provide peer support	58.6	41.4

Professional Development		
Orientation sessions for new teachers prior to the start of the school year	86.2	13.8
Professional development that is meaningful and relevant to special education issues	82.8	17.2
School wide, mandatory professional development sessions for all teachers which promoted collaboration among peers	80.5	19.5
Special sessions at the school site aimed at assisting beginning teachers during the school year	55.2	44.8

Induction components. The induction components were categorized into four constructs according to the provider of the component (mentor, administrator, colleague/peer, and professional development). The induction components were then listed in a high-low range within each of the four constructs. Overall, the induction component received by most respondents (86.2%) was an orientation session for new teachers prior to the start of the school year. The lowest percentage of respondents (37.9%) reported receiving release time from their administrators to meet with their assigned mentor. Over 50% of the respondents indicated receiving 21 of the 25 listed induction components.

Mentor support. Within the first construct, mentor support, the component most participants experienced was a mentor who provides support and guidance in the areas of planning and instruction (63.2%). This component was followed very closely by a mentor who maintains a professional and confidential relationship based on responsibility and trust (62.1%). The induction component received the least by the participants was a mentor who helps the early career teacher acclimate to the culture of the school community.

Administrative support. The second construct is administrator support. For most of the respondents, administrators provided necessary release time for early career teachers to attend training sessions (77%). However, over half the participants did not receive necessary support from their administrators in other crucial areas. Less than half (48.3%) had extra-curricular duties reduced or eliminated, only 43.7% of the respondents were provided release time to observe other teachers, 58.6% did not have a mentor in the same grade level and/or subject matter, and just over one third (37.9%) of the respondents were provided release time to meet with their mentor.

Colleague/peer support. Colleagues/Peer support was the third construct. Most respondents indicated that they felt their colleagues and peers respected their work as special education teachers and provided support (83.9%); however, only 59.8% of the respondents received constructive feedback on non-evaluative classroom observations from their colleagues/peers. Furthermore, just 58.6% of the respondents reported having colleagues/peers who participated in information meetings for groups of new teachers to provide peer support

Professional development. The fourth construct was professional development. Most respondents indicated receiving professional development at their school site. Most of the respondents (86.2%) were provided orientation sessions prior to the start of the school year, 82.8% felt the professional development sessions were meaningful and relevant to special education issues, and 80.5% of the respondents participated in school wide, mandatory professional development sessions for all teachers which promoted collaboration among peers.

Perception of induction components. In addition to investigating the induction components experienced by the respondents, the survey asked respondents to indicate the value they placed on each induction component on their development as a quality special education teacher. The survey results revealed that early career special education teachers value all 25 induction components. Value ratings for all 25 were above a mean rating of 3.0 which signified the threshold for a positive value. Ratings ranged from 3.72 (out of 4.0) to 3.78, indicating the teachers perceive all 25 strategies as valuable or very valuable. Standard deviations of the responses ranged from 0.46 to 0.92 indicating a small variability in responses. The low standard deviation, combined with a high mean suggests few teachers dissented from the majority that valued the strategies highly. Means and standard deviations reflecting early career special education teachers' perceptions of the value of induction program components are reported in Table 15.

Table 15

Perceptions of Induction Components Provided by School Site

Induction Strategy	M	SD
A mentor who		
Provides assistance with special education compliance issues (IEP, paperwork, instruction, etc.)	3.78	0.52
Models appropriate instructional techniques	3.68	0.62
Maintains a professional and confidential relationship based on responsibility and trust	3.63	0.63
Is accessible and willing to devote time and energy to assist the beginning teacher	3.63	0.63
Provides support and guidance in the areas of planning and instruction	3.55	0.70
Helps the beginning teacher acclimate to the culture of the school community	3.43	0.74
Is available for regularly scheduled observations	3.40	0.80
Provides post-observation feedback on the beginning teacher's progress in a timely manner	3.38	0.74
Administrators who		

Demonstrate support, understanding, and encouragement	3.72	0.54
Support beginning teachers in discipline matters	3.72	0.56
Provide release time for beginning teachers to attend training sessions	3.64	0.51
Assign a special education mentor for the special education beginning teachers in the same grade level and/or subject area	3.52	0.68
Provide release time for beginning teachers to observe other teachers	3.45	0.74
Provide release time for beginning teachers to meet with their mentor	3.40	0.70
Reduce (or eliminate) extra-curricular duties	3.23	0.92
Colleagues/Peers who		
Support and respect beginning teachers work as a special education teacher	3.70	0.46
Have a great deal of cooperative effort among each other	3.67	0.58
Provide assistance/support to beginning teachers in dealing with stressors encountered during their first few years teaching	3.61	0.62
Allow beginning teachers to observe them teaching	3.51	0.71
Provide constructive feedback on non-evaluative classroom observations	3.45	0.69
Participate in information meetings for groups of new teachers to provide peer support	3.44	0.64
Professional Development		
Professional development that is meaningful and relevant to special education issues	3.69	0.49
Special sessions at the school site aimed at assisting beginning teachers during the school year	3.52	0.63
Orientation sessions for new teachers prior to the start of the school year	3.49	0.73
School wide, mandatory professional development sessions for all teachers which promoted collaboration among peers	3.48	0.64

The induction components were categorized into four constructs according to the provider of the component (mentor, administrator, colleague/peer, and professional development). The induction components were then listed in a high-low range within each of the four constructs. Overall, the induction component valued by most respondents (M=3.78) was a mentor who provides assistance with special education compliance issues (IEP, paperwork, instruction, etc.). Although none of the 25 induction components received an overall value rating below 3.0, the induction component with the lowest

value rating was, administrators who reduce (or eliminate) extra-curricular duties (3.23). Each of the four induction component constructs are explored below.

Mentor support. Within the first construct, mentor support, the component most participants indicated as most valuable (M=3.78) was a mentor who provides assistance with special education compliance issues (IEP, paperwork, instruction, etc.). This component was followed by a mentor who models appropriate instructional techniques (M=3.68). The component in this construct which was indicated as least valuable by the participants was a mentor who is available for regularly scheduled observations (M=3.23).

Administrative support. Administrators who demonstrate support, understanding and encouragement, as well as administrators who support beginning teachers in discipline matters had the highest perceived value (M=3.72). These components were followed by administrators who provide release time for beginning teachers to attend training sessions (M=3.64), administrators who assign a special education mentor for special education beginning teachers in the same grade level and/or subject area (M=3.52). The component in this construct which was indicated as least valuable by the participants was an "administrator who reduces (or eliminates) extra-curricular duties" (M=3.23).

Colleague/peer support. Having the support and respect of their colleagues was listed as the component most valuable to the beginning teacher (M=3.70). This was followed closely by 2 components; have a great deal of cooperative effort among each other (M=3.67), and provide assistance/support to beginning teachers in dealing with stressors encountered during the first few years teaching (M=3.61). The component in this construct which was least valuable to early career special education teachers in this

study was colleagues' participation in information meetings for groups of new teachers to provide peer support (M=3.44).

Professional development. The two components of the professional development construct perceived as the most valuable to the respondents of the survey were: professional development that is meaningful and relevant to special education issues (M=3.69), and special sessions at the school site aimed at assisting beginning teachers during the school year (M=3.52). The least valuable component of this construct was school wide, mandatory professional development sessions for all teachers which promoted collaboration among peers (M=3.48).

Research Question 2

The second research question addressed the similarities or differences in perceptions of the induction components experienced by the participants. Specifically, what are the similarities or differences in perceptions about induction support between early career special education teachers who plan to remain in the special education profession and those who plan to leave the special education profession?

To answer this question, the researcher conducted an independent samples *t*-test to compare the level of satisfaction means of early career special education teachers who indicated a desire to stay in the special education profession and those that did not. A *t*-test assumes that variances from the populations from which the sample is drawn are equal. In order to satisfy the preconditions of a *t*-test, a Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was performed. The purpose of conducting this procedure was to determine equality of variance and to strengthen the validity of the results.

For the variable Satisfaction, the F value for Levene's test was 0.588 with a significance value of 0.445. This indicates that the variances between the two sample populations are probably the same. Because the significance value in the level of satisfaction is greater than 0.05, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met and a *t*-test was deemed appropriate.

An independent t-test was conducted to compare the level of satisfaction of the induction experience between early career special education teachers who indicated a desire to remain in the special education profession and those that did not. Mean scores were higher for early career special education teachers who indicated a desire to remain the field (M = 2.92, SD = 0.87) then those who did not (M = 2.19, SD = 0.74); t = (85), $p<0.001$. These results suggest that respondents who indicated a desire to stay in the profession of special education were significantly more satisfied with their induction experience then respondents who indicated a desire to leave. The probability that the difference would have occurred by chance is less than 0.001. The data are illustrated in Table 16.

Table 16

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tail)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	.588	.445	3.800	85	.000	.731	.193	.349	1.114
	Equal variances not assumed			4.049	58.715	.000	.731	.181	.370	1.093

To further investigate research question two, the responses to the survey question, "In three years, I see myself…," were analyzed using a discriminant analysis to determine a relationship between special education teachers' perceived value of induction components experienced at their school site and their intent to remain in the field of special education. The survey responses were analyzed to predict membership among the two groups: Special education teachers who plan to remain teaching and special education teachers who plan on leaving the field of special education.

Each item on the survey was categorized based on the four sections representing induction support: mentoring, administrative support, collegial/peer support, and professional development – resulting in four variables. In this analysis, there were 87 valid cases and four variables. The minimum required ration of cases to independent

variables is 5 to 1 with preferred ratio of 20 to 1. The ratio of cases to independent variables in this study was 21.3 to 1 which satisfied the minimum requirement.

In addition to the requirement for the ratio of cases to independent variables, a discriminant analysis requires that there be a minimum number of cases in the smallest group defined by the dependent variable. The number of cases in the smallest group must be larger than the number of independent variables and contain more than 20 cases. In this analysis, the number of cases in the smallest group was 27 which is larger than the number of independent variables (4), satisfying the minimum requirement. Additionally, the number of cases in the smallest group satisfied the preferred minimum of 20 cases. Table 17 illustrates the prior possibilities for groups.

Table 17

Prior Probabilities for Groups

		Cases Used in Analysis	
Three Year Plan	Prior	Unweighted	Weighted
As a special education teacher	.690	60	60.0
Not in the profession of special education	.310	27	27.0
Total	1.000	87	87.0

The eigenvalues table provides information about the relative efficacy of each discriminant function. Table 18 gives information about the effectiveness of the discriminant function. An eigenvalue indicates the proportion of variance explained. A large eigenvalue is associated with a strong function. The canonical relation is a correlation between the discriminant scores and the levels of the dependent variable. A correlation indicates a function that discriminates well. The present correlation of 0.203 was not high (1.00 is perfect).

Table 18

Eigenvalues

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	.043a	100.0	100.0	.203

a. First 1 canonical discriminant functions were used in the analysis.

The key statistic indicating whether or not there is a relationship between the independent and dependent variables is the significance test for Wilks' Lambda. Wilks' Lambda is the proportion of the total variance in the discriminant scores not explained by differences among groups. It is used to test the null hypothesis that the means of all of the independent variables are equal across groups of the dependent variable. If the means of the independent variables are equal for all groups, the means will not be a useful basis for predicting group membership, thus showing there is no relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Table 19 illustrates the Wilks' Lambda statistic for the test of function 1 (chi-square = 3.486) which had a probability of .480. This is greater than the level of significance of 0.05 indicating that the difference in means is not statistically significant. The group means do not appear to differ. Therefore, the means will not be a useful basis for predicting group membership

Table 19

Wilks' Lambda

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	.959	3.486	4	.480

Phase 2: Qualitative Data Analysis and Results

Research Question 3

The third research question addresses the researcher's intent to give a voice to early career special education teachers. Specifically, this question asks, how does the perceived level of induction support received by early career special education teachers influence their views about (a) their work, (b) student achievement, and (c) their professional futures?

The qualitative data collected for this study were analyzed using methods outlined by Rubin and Rubin (2005). First the researcher transcribed all audio taped interviews verbatim into Microsoft Word. Following the transcription process, the researcher read the transcripts, made marginalized notes, and used Inductive Analysis (Patton, 1990) to identify patterns, themes, and categories of analysis that emerged from the data.

After reading and refining all transcripts, each theme and concept was coded. The preliminary codes were highlighted, grouped, and charted into tables using Microsoft Excel. The process of breaking down the data into themes and subthemes, color coding and organizing data into tables, and identifying and analyzing significant statements to detect meaning to each of the participants, as well as looking for systematic similarities and differences between the participants, was continuously refined throughout the entire analysis.

The analysis of the data demonstrated that while district induction programs do offer certain necessary supports to beginning special education teachers, there are still challenges that most of the teachers faced that were not addressed through the induction

process. Through semi-structured interviews, six early career special education teachers expressed their passion for the art of teaching, their dedication to students with disabilities, their frustration with being a beginning teacher, and the unique challenges of being a minority [special education teacher] at their work site. In order to preserve the integrity and authenticity of the participants' views, interviews were not edited for grammatical correctness. General participant profiles were presented to give the reader a clear picture and understanding of each participant's background. Then participants' views about their work site were considered; specifically, feelings regarding each induction component - mentoring, administrative support, colleagues/peers, and professional development- were explored. Next, participants' views on student achievement were discussed. Finally, the researcher questioned each participant about his or her plans for the future. The majority of the participants expressed a desire to stay in the profession and to become mentors to upcoming beginning special education teachers so that they would have positive experiences. Furthermore, the participants indicated that while they did receive support from some colleagues, the overall school culture was not supportive. As a result, participants offered relevant ideas for additional or alternate induction components that would support them more effectively given the unique context of their responsibilities.

Participant Profiles

Participant characteristics are presented in this section. To maintain confidentiality, the teacher's school information was not identified and each participant chose a pseudonym for identification.

Char began her career in 1992 as a paraprofessional in a Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED) program at a local high school. She was a paraprofessional for 14 years before deciding to go to Nova Southeastern University to earn her Bachelors in Science Exceptional Student Education Kindergarten-12 grade (ESE K-12) English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsed teaching degree. Special education has been close to her heart since the time her son was identified as learning disabled in second grade. Char teaches students with autism in a special diploma program at a high school. This is Char's fourth year teaching.

Adi has been a psychologist/behavior specialist for the SED program for many years. Her position was cut, and she was surplused on the second day of school during the 2010-2011 school year; she had never taught before that day. Adi is a grandmother. Her 3-year old grandson has been identified as developmentally delayed with autistic tendencies. She prides herself on consistently researching and learning about autism and new ways to educate children. Adi is a first year teacher in a self-contained classroom for students with intellectual disabilities. There are six first grade students in her classroom.

Spartan describes himself as a grandfather of a high school aged young lady. Teaching is his second and most satisfying career. Spartan has three certifications - ESE, Social Studies, and English 6-12. He teaches two periods of Social Studies to students with mild to moderate disabilities on a standard diploma track. In addition, he teaches four periods in inclusion classrooms. He states that he feels general education teachers respect him more because he is certified to teach the specific subject area as well as having a degree in special education.

Martha is 38 and attended St. Thomas University where she received a master's degree in Special Education. Her bachelor's degree was in Business Administration from Florida International University (FIU). She is taking courses at FIU in Reading Education, hoping to become highly qualified. She is also ESOL endorsed. Martha co-teaches four Language Arts classes and a two hour, self-contained Language Arts/Reading class for middle school students with cognitive delays.

Mary is a single mom of two grown children. She has a master's degree in Mental Health and is a certified teacher. Mary is the special education, inclusion teacher for fifth grade at the elementary school where she works. She is primarily responsible for four students identified as Emotionally Disturbed and Learning Disabled. She is currently in her fifth year of teaching. Mary also teaches adult learners through the Adult Education night school program at a local high school.

Isabella is a middle school teacher. She co-teaches in an inclusion classroom for four periods, teaches one period of science to a class of students all identified as learning disabled and is also a general education science teacher for two periods. Isabella is in her third year of teaching and reports that she is liked and respected by her students and colleagues. She is currently finishing her master's degree in Cognitive and Behavioral Disorders at Nova Southeastern University and plans to obtain certification in Applied Behavior Analysis.

Participants Views on Their Work

The guided interviews focused on obtaining information about the supports in place that support beginning teachers at various school sites; however, teacher frustration dominated the interviews and the focus during many of the interviews centered around

the challenges that beginning special education teachers' faced at work during the first few years of their teaching careers. The notion of frustration with lack of resources and lack of support at work was continuously referred to by most of the participants. As Martha stated, "I love teaching, but the paperwork and the lack of support or understanding from administration and staff is overwhelming and frustrating." Lack of support was viewed as frustration with a lack of physical resources, lack of knowledge or, as Adi put it, a lack of respect for her as a teacher:

> I felt violated. They violated my rights for decision, my right to be prepared to give the best quality education to those students. I was placed in a classroom with nothing. NO materials with 3 kids who were wild, throwing things. I was not prepared for that. I didn't know they were coming out, they were leaving wild. Tantrums, melt downs, running away, it was chaos.

Along this line, Mary added, "My first year I was just thrown in a classroom, that's it. I don't know how I got in my head that I was going to do this, but I remember that I didn't even know what a lesson plan was." Similarly, Spartan expressed his frustration with his lack of knowledge about pedagogy, explaining that since he did not come from a traditional education school, he did not have a lot of resources to use with the students. He also didn't have knowledge about how to break up a two hour block of time to maximize instruction. Based on their perspectives, lack of support at work was linked to how they felt in their role as teachers.

Another area that seemed to add to the participants' increased frustration was an overall apathetic school culture that did not accept or embrace them as beginning special education teachers. Spartan explained:

> Most [general education] teachers are neutral to non-accepting [of special education teachers and students in inclusion classes]. The typical resistance I get

> is that there is going to be behavior issues, but the worst student behavior, almost without qualification, has been the general education students in those classes.

When asked about the school culture at her school, Martha stated, "Sometimes I feel 'they' would rather make us all disappear." When probed further, she continued by saying, "Special Education seems as if you whisper it down the halls, meaning everyone knows it's there, but no one really wants to acknowledge it."

Isabella and Mary have a different opinion of their school's culture. Both participants noted that not all general education teachers viewed special education teachers negatively. Both noted that it really depended on each individual person. There seemed to be a range of emotions toward special education teachers, from indifference to respect. Mary shared several situations she has encountered that demonstrate how some members of the staff view her as an "afterthought" or "not as important as the general education teachers." Specifically:

> One of the coaches felt that if I needed information on my few students, I should just ask the classroom teacher to photocopy that particular section for me, I didn't warrant my own data. Also, they do not send me to trainings, she says that [the other teacher] will just let you know when she gets back."

Mary continues by saying, "As an inclusion teacher, you're just there. You don' have the same… You end up feeling like a helper you know." However Isabella has a unique way of looking at her co-teachers:

> I take it as if I have a wife or husband every period and I try to work with them and pick my battles. If I don't feel it's something that infringes on the child's learning or my relationship with the teachers, I don't push it.

In the quest to support beginning teachers, MDCPS adopted a model of induction support which is implemented at each school site. The participants had definite views on

how each component of their induction experience affected how they viewed their work site.

Mentor support. The analysis of the data collected from the participants' surveys demonstrated that support from a mentor was perceived as very valuable during the first few years of beginning special education teachers' careers. Spartan supports this by stating, "A really good mentor is valuable to clue you into what's going on in the school and the culture of the school." While not all participants were assigned a formal mentor as part of their induction program, each participant found someone within their school to serve as a primary means of support.

MDCPS designates the assignment of a mentor for a beginning teacher to the principal of each school. When asked about mentoring, three participants indicated that they were never officially assigned a mentor, two indicated they had a mentor who was a general education teacher in a different grade/subject area, and one participant was assigned a special education mentor.

Isabelle and Char indicated that they had not been assigned a mentor; however, they were able to secure support from their Special Education chairperson and special education colleagues. Both were very satisfied with the support they received from their chair and co-workers. In fact, Char states, "I don't think I would have made it through that first year without the support of the other Autistic teachers, they got me through." Adi was not officially assigned a mentor either, but the other special education teachers at her school tried to help and support her. Adi explained that, "they came to help, but they came to scream. I am not like that." Therefore, she didn't really feel supported.

Spartan's mentor was a special education teacher in the same subject area he was to teach that year. He had a very positive experience with his mentor and feels her role in his development was crucial, further stating:

> She helped me kinda find my way around, made suggestions because they wanted me to observe some of the better teachers and she had been around long enough that she know who those better teachers were. She made the arrangements for our classroom visits and things. She was very helpful.

Martha and Mary were both assigned a general education mentor in a different grade level. In direct contrast to Spartan, they did not have good experiences with their mentors. When asked for a specific example of working with her mentor, Martha shared:

> I remember crying after school one day. I had lost all control of the class. There was nothing I could do about their behavior. That's not really true, but that's how I felt. I went to my mentor about and she just told me she didn't have that problem

Mary had a hard time adjusting to the classroom during her first few months as a teacher. Her principal had actually begun the process to terminate her since she was within the 90 day probationary period. The union was asked to intervene since she had not been issued a mentor, nor been given the opportunity to improve her teaching skills. Shortly thereafter, Mary was assigned a general education mentor who was at a different grade level. Mary states that the extent of the support received consisted of passing by, expressly, "she met with me once. Then she would come in and say 'is everything ok?' and then she would go." Additionally, Mary did not feel supported if she had questions, "If I asked, 'Can I talk to you about something?' She would be like, 'just come see me whenever', but that's just like very vague - I don't know her schedule."

Administrative and collegial support. Most of the participants felt that their principal was an effective school leader. In addition, responses to the guided interview

questions suggested that the participants felt that the principal met his/her basic responsibility in regards to the early career teachers. The extent of the principals' support was observed with varying degrees of effectiveness. Adi remarked, "The principal was very receptive and the assistant principal as well. They welcomed me when I got there." Both Char and Isabella expressed that if there is a problem, they know that the principal will be very supportive. Isabella further explained:

> If I ever do need something, the principal has been more than open in coming to me and letting me know [to go to her] if I need something. So I do feel that if I need any assistance or if anything is needed that the principal does play a part in helping me with that.

Martha did not have much contact with her principal and felt that, "She doesn't really support any beginning teacher other than what is expected." However, both Mary and Spartan had positive relationships with their principals although they both indicated that the principal helped out more with the overall running of the school then directly with them. When asked specifically what the principal did to support them, Mary responded:

> I believe [the principal] pretty much assigns new teachers or those teachers that are coming or interventions or things like that. The principal now has [new teachers] observe other teachers, has them sit with coaches, do planning with them since our lesson plans are a bit different because we are an ETO school.

Additionally, Spartan felt supported because he knew the principal's expectations from the first day on the job. He explained, "[The principal] is very supportive. For my first evaluation he brought me into his office and kinda gave me a detailed checklist of what he expected to see."

Most of the participants cited their department chairperson as the person they went to when they needed assistance in their classroom. The role of department

chairperson was viewed as a pseudo-administrator and one of the main reasons that the teachers felt supported in their new roles. The chairperson was a trusted colleague because they had experienced the same situations as the early career special education teacher, and they were seen as an extension of their administration because of their valuable experience. There were endless anecdotes and praise by all participants when asked about their experiences with colleagues at their school site.

Martha described the importance of having the department chairperson's help along with the entire special education department's support:

> In the end, [the department chairperson] has helped me more than anyone else. She's even walked me into my classes to observe me, all unofficially of course. The teachers within my department were also very helpful. They even stayed late or arrived really early to help me write IEPs, plan strategies, etc.

Char also felt supported by her entire department:

> Working with my immediate supervisors and my co-workers was amazing. We are always there for each other and that makes it all worthwhile. Also, we have very supportive parents are our school. Having support in your school when it comes to these types of students is so important. A lot of times there is no money for their needs.

Mary revealed how she received support from various special education personnel she encountered her first year:

> My BMT at my first school was phenomenal and what I was able to learn, I learned from her. I would also go to the chairperson. She's been an ESE teacher for a long time. I know this wonderful person who is a staffing specialist. She gave me her phone number and I call her for everything.

Spartan had a similar experience. He relayed to the researcher:

> I came here in January and so I worked with six different teachers so I got to see many different styles and that was helpful. I was brand new to teaching and I could see how different people look to observe. I saw each teacher, what style they worked in and what different things they did and got a number of ideas. The teacher I replaced didn't leave right away so she taught me a lot of things. I

> remember the real help came from my department chair and program specialist. They walked me through everything and checked [my SPED paperwork] just to be sure.

Isabelle expressed how important her special education colleagues were to her success and development as a special education teacher. She stated, "We collaborate and talk a lot with each other. So if we need help, we ask assistance of one another. In many ways they mentor me in ways that can facilitate me confronting or dealing with any situation."

Professional development. The nature of ongoing induction via professional development throughout the school year looked quite different across the various school settings. The spectrum of support ranged from a few organized professional development workshops sponsored by the school to regularly scheduled participation in monthly support meetings. Most early career special education teachers found professional development at their school to be somewhat helpful, but felt it was geared to the general population, not specific to the needs of special education. According to the participants, the best workshops were ones that individual teachers found on their own, specific to their individual needs.

School site professional development was the most limited. Char experienced monthly meetings for all beginning teachers at her school. During those meetings she was able to acquire "knowledge regarding specific policies and procedures." Additionally, "we'd meet during our professional development days when we have early release to learn new techniques and best practices." Martha did not find the professional development given at school very helpful. She felt that, "theory and practice felt like two different things" and "the follow up activities seem so detached from what we learned."

When questioned further, Martha explained that her needs were actually so much more basic:

> When I stepped into the classroom, I didn't even know how to organize my classroom or decorate the bulletin boards - all that stuff about color having a direct effect on behavior. I really wish there were staff developments that focused on staff development

Spartan agreed these meetings or workshops were often geared toward the general population of the school stating, "There have been specific trainings on differential instruction which should cover everything but yeah, it is geared towards general education type issues." However, he did find them useful, "It's good because it keeps me in the loop, because frequently they don't put SPED teachers into the [informational] emails."

MDCPS offers district induction support through a program called MINT. When I questioned Mary about district support she explained,

> There was a program called MINT that was available and something else called NEST. But it wasn't during school hours and it conflicted with my second job and my son. They had programs available, but not everyone can go at that time. If it would've been during work or on Saturdays I could have gone and gotten help there.

Mary felt that she "had to find all my own resources." Therefore, the professional development activities found most useful by the participants were workshops geared towards specific topics that were relevant to the unique needs of special education. Isabella went, "to professional development that interested me outside of school. That was very good." Although Adi, "went and it served. It was very good." She brought up that, "I wanted to have the time to be prepared so I could practice what I learned in the classroom."

Participants' Views on Student Achievement

One of the most influential factors on student achievement is the quality of the teacher. The majority of the participants seemed to equate student achievement not only with effective teaching, but appropriate placement within the educational setting. Some participants expressed frustration regarding student achievement stating that students would be more successful if placed in the correct educational setting. Two central themes became apparent. The first, as schools move towards evidence - based instruction, it is essential that all teachers be qualified to teach their subject matter and, second, students need to be educated alongside their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate -- in the least restrictive environment.

Spartan recounted his first six months as a beginning teacher, a situation he felt was ideal. Spartan was hired mid-year in January. Because the teacher he was to replace did not leave for a few months, he was able to shadow and learn. For the remainder of the school year, his administration assigned him to work with six different teachers. Being new to teaching, the administration felt it would be beneficial for him to observe excellent teachers in practice. "Since I was new, they weren't expecting a lot out of me. They did take me to the history teacher because they knew about my history degree and wanted to see what I could do with the kids." In this position, Spartan was able to observe teaching styles, develop his repertoire, and see what worked and what did not. As a result, Spartan felt he had all the tools necessary to maximize student achievement when he was given his own class.

Isabella had a similar first year experience. Isabella was initially hired to be an inclusion co-teacher. She spent her first year co-teaching six different periods with six

different teachers. "It was quite an experience but I felt it was a great experience because of the fact that I was able to see each different teaching style so that allowed me to perfect how I would want to teach." By her second year, Isabella was teaching in her own varying exceptionalities classroom. Now in her third year, she is also teaching a general education science class. She noted that "I am in different subjects/periods because it's where I am needed so that the kids are successful."

Spartan teaches history in both an inclusion setting and a varying exceptionalities classroom. When asked which setting he believes best meets the needs of the student, he looked perplexed, answering, "Both work really well for students. Essentially, I'm just working with students in either setting." He further explained that regardless of the setting, he had a pacing guide to follow and he made sure all his students were learning regardless of the setting.

Isabella seemed to have the same experience as Spartan about the success of students relative to their placement. She believes "a lot of the kids who are in the inclusion setting are quite high functioning, they really just require somewhat of accommodations that could facilitate their learning experience, you adhere to the curriculum." The students in her varying exceptionalities classes are lower functioning:

> They require far more exceeding accommodations. So I work a lot with the VE population and their needs. Some really do need to be there, they really do need that help. You really need to sit with them and guide them through, you know, just the basic premise of writing a sentence, you know, or word. You need to sit down and try to adhere the curriculum to their understanding. So to answer your question, I would feel that the best placement for a child's success would depend on the child's academic functioning. I don't want to say that one is better than the other.

Conversely, Adi felt she was committing a disservice to her students by teaching them in their current setting, a self-contained classroom and adamantly expressed: "placing a kid under these circumstances is a crime to me. I am playing with the life of an individual." Adi argues that special education, exclusively, without inclusion, does not work. It is her opinion that the entire school system needs to be reformed. Throughout the interview, the influence of her mental health background was evident to the researcher. Specifically:

> There are our children growing into adolescents without coping skills. They have FCAT, they go into math, but they don't have coping skills. Without coping skills, without a strong emotional base they do nothing. They are being dependent on society. We [the school system] are not working. We're not making people free anymore.

She continues by stating, "It interferes with the whole entire life future of an individual. How strong an impact is the school on a life. I don't like to play with people's lives."

Interestingly, Char is in the same teaching scenario as Adi, but has had a different experience. Char teaches in a self-contained program but is very happy with the system at her school. Although the program is self-contained, the students are included in all social aspects of the school community. They also have real world experiences tied into the curriculum -- "our program goes out in the community weekly to make the students more aware of different settings and it makes it interesting for the higher functioning students." Additionally, students with disabilities in the self-contained program are encouraged to participate with their non-disabled peers in clubs, pep-rallies, social school functions, and graduation. General education students are benefitting by learning tolerance and acceptance through their interactions with their peers with disabilities.

Char's love for her job and her students radiates from her. She knows she is an integral part of her students' success and often gets to see the effect of her influence on her students' lives, "my students that graduated in the nineties [as a paraprofessional] still keep in touch with me, so I know it really makes a difference when it is important to you and the student as far as seeing the progression."

Martha also expressed concerns regarding the way placement of students with disabilities within educational setting can impact their achievement. When asked about challenges impacting her students' learning she responded:

> I feel I get pulled in all different directions. If I am not in an IEP meeting, then my co-teacher is. We are not really given substitutes and the class size is out of control. We are up to 44 students per class. The administration figures 22 students per teacher, two teachers in the class. How are we supposed to meet all of our kids' needs that way?

Mary echoes Martha's sentiments about placement. After moving into special education, she expected that the students were going to get the program that helped them the most. She has not seen that. She gave an example of an illiterate boy who she has taught since third grade:

> We are now in fifth grade and he still doesn't know how to read because in the setting of inclusion there is not enough time in inclusion to dedicate to that student, you know. When I sit with him during differentiated instruction time and we're doing sight words or phonemes, and we do phonics and we do this and we do that, it's 15 minutes. 15 minutes is not going to do anything. Add to that the fact that he goes home and nobody at home is reinforcing anything that I'm doing and of course summer comes along or any of the breaks come along, he loses everything; every year, whatever gains we make. I have tried to get him into resource. He does not belong in this school because we don't have a resource program, It's frustrating because I know he's not where he needs to be.

Although she seems very frustrated with inclusion as a teaching mechanism, Mary actually sees the benefits for some students. She has had several students excel in

inclusion classrooms making extraordinary gains with the interventions provided. Additionally she likes the fact that "since I am there and I'm not exclusive to any one student, I get to help all the ones that are low" even students who are not identified with a disability.

Another interesting point made by Martha was about the curriculum. As pointed out earlier by Spartan, the school system is moving towards researched- based curriculum. Often, these specialized curricula are scripted and not individualized for each student's needs. This goes against the very premise of special education. Martha describes an example which occurred in her class:

> The self-contained class is supposed to be for cognitively low students, but the reality of the situation is that there is a mix between those types of students and students whose behavior impedes them being in a general education setting. The problem comes when the curriculum is scripted. The students with behavior problems are generally not that low which means bored students and more behavior issues.

Participants' Views on their Professional Futures

The last question in the interview asked each teacher about his or her plan for remaining in the field of education in the future. The reasons for remaining or deciding to leave the field of special education were based more on practicality than on personal philosophy about the field of special education. All participants expressed a passion for teaching and feeling rewarded when working with students who are identified with a disability. However, outside influences were the overwhelming theme in the participants' decision to remain at their school site in the role of a special education teacher.

A passion for teaching and special education was evident in my interview with Isabella. She expressed:

> Honestly, I like to teach. I like to teach and very much enjoy being in the classroom setting. I do enjoy being in the company of students. I enjoy the aspect of teaching. I enjoy the aspect of being their educator and of being, in some way, their mentor.

However, she returned to Nova Southeastern University earlier that year to obtain a master's degree and certification in Applied Behavior Analysis with the hope of moving into behavior therapy. Isabella's reasoning was:

> I enjoy very much taking into measure behavior therapy which in many ways influences many things in special education. A lot of principles and things that are placed in behavior therapy are things that they tell us in a classroom setting so I can see how it works together and how I got that passion from where I am in special education.

Char also expressed a passion for her work "I love being in the ESE population. I've worked with students with autism and also had a chance to work in inclusion and love that also." However, the biggest factor for staying at her current location is mostly practical. "I love that it [work location] is close to my home." Char expressed satisfaction with her work location and student achievement, stating that her decision to stay at her current work location as a special education teacher was because "I love the people I work with and the progress you see in our students. I plan on staying here for as long as I can."

Martha had a similar response when asked about her future plans in special education, "Despite all the ups and downs, I really like what I do. I love seeing the kids actually get it. When their face lights up, it's the most rewarding thing ever." Her reasons for remaining at her current location as a special education teacher were also quite practical, "Budget cuts keep me teaching special education in this school. Seriously, the

way school systems are cutting back, I am happy wherever they hire me. I also live down the block." Spartan also named practical reasons for remaining in special education:

> This year I was given the opportunity to teach general education English. I turned it down and chose to remain in with the ESE department. In ESE I get a sixth period supplement. I also have seniority, I would have been transferred by now had I not been in special education.

During the interview, Mary appeared disillusioned with the field of special education. Although she stated that she loved teaching and loved special education, her satisfaction with her second job, teaching adult ESOL learners through the Adult Education Program, was evident:

> My adult students, those are my babies. That's where I get my satisfaction. I love it, I love it." When asked if she planned on moving out of special education, she replied, "I don't think I'll move into adult education because there is no full-time. I can't afford not to get paid what I get paid right now.

However, Mary stated it is what she really wants to do, "I always wanted to teach at the university level. Teaching in adult education at night has solidified that fact that I know that's what I want to do. It's more rewarding and you see the difference in the way they talk."

At the time of the interview, Mary stated that she wanted to move out of special education and she had already asked to move to a general education position for the following year. In Mary's opinion, special education teachers in inclusion settings do not get the opportunity to really teach.

> For next year I've already told the principal that if I'm able to, I would like to teach [general education] math. As an inclusion teacher, you don't have the same… you're just there, but you end up feeling like a helper. I like teaching. If she changes me to math, I'll accept it, if she says stay in special education, its fine with me. I really don't want it… I want to teach. I want to have control of my class. I do.

Adi was the most vocal participant regarding her dislike with being a special education teacher. As she entered the interview, she asked me, "Do you teach special education? Do you like it?" Without waiting for me to respond, she continued, "I hate it." The interview lasted over two hours and ended on the same note as it started with Adi maintaining, "I don't want to continue in this school, this is… I don't like it. It's a drain."

Adi's compassion for her students was felt throughout the interview. She knew her students' strengths and weaknesses, had researched strategies for instruction, and demonstrated a strong desire to be an effective teacher. She even tutored general education fourth grade students after school without getting paid. However, she felt lost and overwhelmed. When asked if she was planning to leave the school or teaching in general, she sighed and said, "No, I won't resign. There are no jobs out there. In psychology there are no jobs. I loved my work with Miami Behavioral, but my friends from there are all out of jobs."

The participants' responses during the interviews centered largely on the desire to be integral members of the school's culture. As discussed earlier, this was one area that seemed to bring about the most frustration to early career special education teachers. When asked what additional support would be beneficial in supporting beginning special education teachers so they would stay in the profession, several participants returned to the theme of school culture. Mary offered suggestions:

> There has to be a culture change in some schools. The school's culture needs to be one where people want to help one another. Where, if you see somebody that is new, you just don't alienate them. When you see a new teacher, introduce yourself to them and tell them to come see you if I they need anything.

Similarly, Adi had the following advice for improving support to beginning special education teachers:

> It is the culture within education that has to be altered. It is massive. It is the way perhaps the media, the things, the kind of behaviors that we praise in society. Like in the golden days. It was a little more education, more respect for your fellow man. I would like to see a camaraderie at the schools. Nobody actually casting away a new teacher or disregarding or treating the new teacher with scorn because they don't know. Of course I don't know anything, I am illiterate.

I asked Adi to further explain what she meant by "I am illiterate." She illustrated her thoughts with the following comparison:

> You opened this door (points to the door of the small conference room at FIU where the interview was taking place) because you are familiar with this school. But I couldn't do it. Not because I don't know how to open a door, it's not because I don't know how to come to this place, it is because I am not familiar with the whole "what you can do and what you cannot do or when it is time for doing it." You've been here, you know the difference.

Summary

The results of the analysis of data collected during the 2009-2010 school year from early career special education teachers employed by MDCPS were presented in Chapter 4. Two hundred seventy three Special Education teachers with less than five years teaching experience were invited to take part in a survey regarding their perceptions about the induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their retention and development as a quality teacher. Of these, 87 usable surveys were completed. Additionally, six teachers participated in follow-up interviews in order to add richness and depth to the study.

Chapter 4 is organized into three sections. Section I provides a description of the study sample used to collect data from the quantitative phase of the study. It is comprised of eight demographic questions in which respondents are asked to reveal information in

the categories of gender, race, years of teaching experience, grade level, primary teaching assignment, teacher preparation program, educational level, ESOL endorsement, and school site grade. Additionally, the participants were asked to respond to three questions about their general perception of their induction experience as it related to receiving needed guidance/assistance and development as an effective teacher. A descriptive statistical analysis of participant responses to the demographic section of the survey was included.

Section 2 contains the quantitative analysis of the responses based on research questions one and two. The survey included in this study listed 25 common induction support strategies. The participants were asked to indicate whether or not the strategy had been provided for them (Yes or No). The induction components were categorized into four constructs according to the type of induction component (mentor, administrator, colleague/peer, and professional development. Overall, the induction component received by most respondents (86.2%) was an orientation session for new teachers prior to the start of the school year. The lowest percentage of respondents (37.9) reported receiving release time from their administrators to meet with their assigned mentor. Over 50% of the respondents indicated receiving at least 21 of the 25 listed induction components. In addition, the survey results reveal early career special education teachers value all 25 induction components. Value ratings for all 25 were above a mean rating of 3.0 which signified the threshold for a positive value. Standard deviations of the responses ranged from 0.46 to 0.92 indicating that the variability in responses was not particularly large. The low standard deviation, combined with a high mean suggests that few teachers dissented from the majority that valued the strategies highly.

A *t*-test was conducted using the responses to the survey question, "In three years, I see myself…", and the respondents' overall satisfaction rating for the induction support they received at their school. The data revealed that the means of satisfaction between early career special education teachers who indicated a desire to stay in the profession and early career special education teachers who indicated a desire to leave the profession were statistically significant.

Responses to the survey question, "In three years, I see myself…", were analyzed using a discriminant analysis to determine whether a relationship exists between special education teachers' intent to remain in the field of special education and special education teachers' perceived value of induction components experienced at their school site. The key statistic indicating whether or not there was a relationship between the independent variable and dependent variables is the significance test for Wilks' Lambda. In this analysis, the Wilks' Lambda statistic for the test of function 1 (chi-square = 3.486) had a probability of .480. This is greater than the level of significance of 0.05. The means do not appear to differ; therefore, the means will not be a useful basis for predicting the group to which a case belongs, and thus there is no relationship between the induction components and whether or not an early career special education will decide to remain in the field of special education or leave.

The final section includes the qualitative analysis of the responses obtained during the follow up, in-depth interviews, which answers research question three. The interviews sought to give a voice to early career special education teachers. The qualitative data collected during this study were analyzed using methods outlined by Rubin and Rubin (2005). The analysis of the data demonstrated that while district

induction programs do offer certain necessary supports to beginning special education teachers, there are still challenges that most of the teachers faced which were not addressed through the induction process. Through semi-structured interviews, six early career special education teachers expressed their passion for the art of teaching, their dedication to students with disabilities, their frustration with being a beginning teacher and the unique challenges being a minority [special education teacher] at their work site presents. The majority of the interview participants expressed a desire to stay in the profession and to become mentors to upcoming beginning special education teachers so that new teachers would have positive experiences. Furthermore, the participants indicated that while they did receive support from some colleagues, the overall school culture was not supportive. As a result, participants offered relevant ideas for additional or alternate induction components that would support them more effectively given the unique contexts of their responsibilities.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher provides a discussion of the findings of the study. The chapter begins with a summary of the problem of special education teacher attrition followed by a review of the purpose of the study. The researcher summarizes and discusses the findings relevant to the first, second, and third research questions. In addition, the limitations of the study and recommendations for all stakeholders are discussed. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

Summary of the Investigation

In this study, the researcher examined early career special education teachers' views of the components of induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their retention and development as a teacher. The researcher explored three fundamental questions about the respondents' views on their induction experience. First, the researcher looked at how early career, special education teachers perceive the level of induction support they received at their school site during their first years teaching. Second, the researcher investigated the relationship between the perceived value placed on induction support and early career special education teachers' intent to remain in the field of special education. Finally, the researcher explored how the perceived level of induction support received by early career special education teachers influenced their views about their work, student achievement and their professional futures. In this investigation, the researcher applied a socialization framework to examine induction from the perspective of the early career special education teacher. A teachers' socialization and development is not necessarily contingent upon the provision of a

formalized support program, but rather upon how teachers interpret and experience their context (Cole, 1991). The context in which beginning teachers work, as well as the many people with whom they interact on a daily basis, all influence their development as a quality educator.

Within this framework, the researcher used a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, consisting of two distinct phases, to examine the perceptions of early career special educators' regarding the components of induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their long-term retention in the classroom and their development as a quality teacher. This design was chosen in order to analyze data collected from early career special education teachers in MDCPS in 2010 and also to give a voice to a sub sample of early career special education teachers. The mixed-methods design involved collecting qualitative data after a quantitative phase in order to explain or follow up the quantitative data in more depth and develop "a rich and comprehensive" understanding (Creswell, 2002, p.182) of the organizational factors that are associated with special education teacher retention and development in the early years of teaching. The rationale for integrating quantitative and qualitative data within the study was based on the fact that neither method in isolation is able to fully examine the research questions. The qualitative phase of the study served to expand the answers obtained from the quantitative strand, thus providing a more robust and complete analysis.

Respondents' Demographics

To gain a general understanding of the respondents, the researcher collected and analyzed demographic data from the survey utilized in this investigation. When analyzing

the data, the researcher found that the typical respondent in this study differed from a typical special education teacher in the United States who, according to Billingsley (n.d.) is primarily a white female. As one of the largest, multi-cultural, urban public school systems in the Unites States, MDCPS demographics differ from many parts of the country. In addition, the district experiences unique challenges in the hiring and retention of quality teachers (e.g., large influx of foreign teachers).

When asked to respond to questions regarding general perceptions of their induction experience and confidence in teaching students with disabilities, early career special education teachers in this study felt very confident in their abilities; however, the researcher found that this confidence was not necessarily due to their induction experience. All but one participant felt confident in their ability to teach students with disabilities. However, nearly half of the respondents did not feel satisfied with their induction experience. The promising news is that 69% of the respondents in this study indicated a desire to remain a special education teacher. With 50% of beginning teachers expected to leave the field of education before their fifth year of teaching (National Commission on Teaching for America's Future, 2003) and special education teachers being over twice as likely to leave the field as their general education colleagues (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), having over two thirds of the teachers in this study indicate a desire to remain in the field of special education is encouraging.

Research Questions

This study, which examined early career special education teachers' view of induction, was framed through the lens of socialization. The socialization of the beginning teacher can determine whether the first few years are a success or failure. Thus,

the process of how teachers are socialized within the school's culture is important not only for the novice teacher but also for the school community that provides the experience. Although the socialization phenomenon occurs throughout the entire career of every employee, it is especially important for novices (Fletcher et al., 2008) because this is the time when they determine the nature of the new organization and whether or not they fit in it (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). In reviewing the literature on beginning teacher socialization, three constant themes emerged. First, the research shows the need for community and collegial support (Angelle, 2002, 2006; Cole, 1991; Holton, 2001; Kardos et al., 2001; Morrison, 2002). In addition, the research finds that the socialization process will occur naturally for beginning teachers (Angelle, 2006; Cole, 1991). The lack of a structured, organized induction program can result in role dissonance, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Billingsley, 2004a). Finally, a positive socialization experience brought about from an effective induction program will reduce turnover and increase a teacher's desire to stay in the profession (Angelle, 2002; Holton, 2001). The research on socialization is especially relevant in the area of special education where feelings of isolation are pervasive because these teachers may be the only one in their school.

Why even look at the induction of beginning teachers? Teachers need to know and understand how to teach (Feinman-Nemser, 2003), which punctuates the importance of receiving an excellent preservice teacher education. However, not all beginning special education teachers have the luxury of an effective preservice education in special education. In order to fill the numerous special education positions, today's teachers are entering the profession from a variety of backgrounds and preparation which threatens to

dilute teacher quality (Sindelar et al., 2005). It is not surprising that they have a multitude of diverse needs. Early career teachers especially are searching for a school climate that fosters a culture of professional collaboration (Kardos, 2005), thus strengthening teacher efficacy; therefore, schools are charged with providing safe working conditions conducive to teaching and learning (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). The importance of this need is highlighted by research indicating that teacher efficacy is linked to student achievement (Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk, 2000).

This study primarily focused on the type of structured and organized induction programs currently utilized at school sites. Overall, the induction component received by most respondents was an orientation session for new teachers prior to the start of the school year. This was expected since MDCPS starts each school year with a New Teacher Orientation scheduled prior to the first reporting day for new hires in August (MDCPS, 2009). Although mentoring is just one component of induction, it is often used exclusively. The majority of the respondents indicated that they had a mentor who provided support and guidance in the areas of planning and instruction (63.2%). Conversely, less than half of the respondents felt that their mentor helped them acclimate to the culture of the school community. This lack of experience with a mentor that helps the beginning teacher acclimate to the culture of the school has been found to augment feelings of isolation (Pugach, 1992). In addition, Whitaker (2000) stated that having a special education mentor was crucial to the development of beginning special education teachers. During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher noted that the majority of the participants did not have a special education mentor. Three interview participants indicated that no official mentor was assigned to them, and two interview participants

indicated that their mentor was from general education. Only one participant indicated having a special education mentor assigned to her. The majority of the participants indicated that they sought out their own, informal mentors from among special education colleagues or support personnel. This further supported the research that shows that the socialization process will occur naturally regardless of a structured, organized induction program (Angelle, 2006; Cole, 1991).

Administrators are one of the most important factors in an early career teacher's decision to remain in the field of education. They have the primary responsibility for the creation of the school climate which cultivates strong relationships among colleagues (Correa & Wagner, 2011) and promotes the development of a positive school culture. It is the combination of the values and actions of the principal and teaching staff as mediated by the overall school cultures that influences the support felt by beginning special education teachers (Gersten et. al., 2001).

Most of the respondents indicated that administrators provided necessary release time for early career teachers to attend training sessions. These training sessions were often mandated by the district, and administrators had no choice but to provide time for the teachers to go. However, over half the participants did not receive necessary support from their administrators in other crucial areas. This is especially concerning because research reveals that administrative support is one of the most important factors affecting teacher satisfaction, morale and retention (Richards, 2003). During the semi-structured interviews, the majority of the participants indicated that their administrators were effective leaders, but because of the size of the school, they rarely saw or dealt with the

principal. In many cases, the participants looked to department chairpersons as their link to administration and their source of guidance and direction.

As Billingsley et al. (2004) found, beginning special education teachers most often received informal support from colleagues and typically found this form of support more helpful than any other. Work environments that are unsupportive will not promote collegial interactions and will fail to provide special educators the support they need to be successful (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). Kardos et al., (2001) described professional school culture as the distinctive blend of norms, values, and accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal, that prevail among colleagues. As found in the semi-structured interviews of this study, the importance of a positive school culture was a prevailing topic for many of the participants.

The majority of the respondents indicated that colleagues and peers respected their work as special education teachers and provided support. This finding, however, was not supported during the semi-structured interviews. The responses during the interviews ranged from feelings that general education colleagues were respectful to neutral to non-accepting. The discrepancy could be attributed to many factors. For example, survey respondents may have equated the terms "colleagues and peers" to mean special education colleagues and peers, friends or supportive coworkers, not necessarily all colleagues; or it may be ascribed to the fact that the participants who volunteered to be interviewed had negative experiences with their colleagues. As Isabella and Mary pointed out during their interviews, when speaking about collegial support, perhaps it really just depended on each individual and their specific personality. It is also important to note that the overall school was not the only culture that mattered to teachers. Some

respondents, such as those in the middle and high school setting, considered the culture of the special education department, of primary importance.

There are innovative ways to tap into positive interactions for general and special education teachers at individual school sites. As co-teaching and induction become more prevalent in the education of students with disabilities, a new form of induction and collegial support can be sustained. When implemented appropriately, teachers who co-teach reported positive attitudes towards this form of professional interaction (Pugach & Winn, 2011). This point was further documented during the semi-structured interviews by both Spartan and Isabella. Co-teaching as an induction tool is a new phenomenon with limited research; however, Pugach and Winn (2011) effectively show how this routine form of collaboration should be tapped and used to support and retain early career special education teachers.

Most respondents indicated receiving professional development at their school site. Over 80% of the respondents were provided orientation sessions prior to the start of the school year, and felt the professional development sessions were meaningful and relevant to special education issues. This was supported in the semi-structured interviews. Although, one participant reported a disconnect between information disseminated during professional development sessions and her ability to implement it in the classroom.

Perceptions of Induction Components

The induction supports experienced by the respondents were not necessarily the induction components they valued. However, early career special education teachers are making it clear that they need and want support. The literature reviewed (e.g., Andrews et al., 2006) and the data collected for this study support this finding. In fact, the survey

results revealed that early career special education teachers valued all 25 induction components. The value ratings for the twenty five components were above a mean rating of 3.0 which signified the threshold for positive value. Moreover, there was not a large variability in the responses. The low standard deviation, combined with an overall high mean, suggested that few teachers disputed the value of induction. The three induction components most valued by the respondents in this study included: a mentor who provided assistance with special education compliance issues (IEP, paperwork, instruction, etc.) administrators who demonstrated support, understanding and encouragement, and Colleagues/Peers who supported and respected beginning teachers' work in special education.

The Value Placed on Induction Support and Intent to Remain in Special Education.

A significant difference was found between early career special education teachers who indicated a desire to remain in the field of special education and those that did not when comparing the means of their satisfaction with their induction experience. This finding adds to previous research related to satisfaction in the work place as a motivator for retention (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Gersten et al., 2001). This study should promote educational researchers to further the research related to this area.

This study further analyzed the induction components to determine if there was an induction component variable (mentor support, administrative support, collegial/peer support, or professional development) that discriminated between early career special education teachers who indicated a desire to remain in the field of special education and those that did not. A statistically significant discriminating variable was not found.

Those teachers who indicated a desire to leave the special education profession had higher perceptions of Administrative Support. The high value placed on Administrative support, coupled with the low percentage of teachers indicating that they received administrative support and data from the semi-structured interviews, led the researcher to conclude that this group of teachers did not feel supported by administration during their first few years teaching.

Much of the research in special education teacher attrition shows that a lack of administrative support is the underlying reason for teachers leaving special education (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Edgar & Pair, 2005; Kaff, 2004). Therefore, this study should serve to reinforce the importance of administrative support on the teaching careers of the special education teachers at their school site.

The Influence of Induction on Teachers' Views

During the course of the semi-structured interviews, several key findings emerged that supported the reported research. The following sections include an examination of the participant's semi-structured interviews. The interviews explored how early career special education teachers felt their school site induction experience influenced their work, student achievement and their professional futures.

Their work. Of all the key findings, the most profound were the participants' views on school culture. Careful attention to the specific induction program within a school's professional culture for beginning special education teachers is needed if a committed and qualified teaching force is to be built and retained at that school. Within the school's culture, the most important factors for the success of early career special

education teachers were mentor support by a special education colleague, support from the school's leadership team, and collegial support.

Although part of the district's induction plan included assigning a mentor to beginning special education teachers, not all teachers received one. This finding is supported in the literature where in general, beginning teachers are more likely to receive informal support from colleagues more often than other forms of support and likely to find this type of support helpful (Billingsley et. al., 2004). Moreover, in this study, the interview participants preferred the support given by informal mentors then the mentors assigned by the school.

During the semi-structured interviews, participants reported that they valued the role of the administrator. Knowing the principal's expectations early on was comforting for the teachers and helped some of the participants acclimate to the school's culture. In addition, the department chairperson was seen as a pseudo-administrator to the early career special education teachers and one of the main reasons that they felt supported in their new roles. During the course of the interviews, there were countless positive anecdotes and experiences recounted by all participants regarding their experiences with special education colleagues at their school site. Feelings toward their general education colleagues were significantly more varied.

Student achievement. There are two major factors that were repeatedly touched upon as having an effect on student achievement--the effectiveness of instruction and the educational placement of a student. Each participant recounted his or her first few months as a special education teacher and the impact of this period on their perceived effectiveness as a special educator. The participants who began their teaching careers in

co-teaching or inclusion classrooms felt the strongest about their abilities. They had a smooth transition into teaching and were able to build a repertoire of best teaching practices. They expressed that confidence in their abilities came quickly. Participants who felt "thrown into a classroom" with a sink-or-swim school site attitude had the most concerns regarding their abilities as a special education teacher.

Throughout the interview process, many conversations inadvertently led to obstacles encountered by early career special education teachers. One variable that consistently came up were teachers' feelings about the educational placement of some students. Views on the educational placement of the students were as varied as there were participants. Some participants felt students could not succeed in their placement, whether that placement be inclusion or self-contained. Other participants felt pulled in so many directions, that they could not give adequate instruction regardless of the placement of the student; a point which is supported in the literature (Kilgore et al., 2003). Regardless of the specifics, each participant pinpointed an area of concern with student placement. With no viable solution or guidance from the veterans, the teachers stated they were doing the best they could with a hope for improvement as they looked to the future.

Professional futures. Remaining in their current position as a special education teacher was based more on practicality than a personal philosophy for these early career special education teachers. The participants expressed a passion for teaching and felt that working with students with disabilities was rewarding. Nonetheless, the overwhelming theme in the participants decision to remain at their school site in the role of a special education teacher came from outside influences such as lack of available jobs in other

areas, lack of opportunity for movement to other positions, proximity of work location to the home or seniority within the school, which are all variables having to do with job security. Even though there is limited research in the literature demonstrating a positive correlation between job security and employee retention, a lack of security or perception of insecurity could cause employees to leave their job. For example, during the interviews, Spartan indicated that he had been asked by administration to move into a general education teaching assignment. He declined, stating that he knew that there would never be a need to surplus teachers in special education, but he had seen it happen in other subject matters and did not want to take a chance on not having a job in the future.

All participants with the exception of one indicated that although they planned on remaining in the field of education, they were thinking of moving to an area outside the field of special education sometime in the future. Some research reveals an overwhelming movement out of special education, but not necessarily out of teaching (Brownell et al., 1997). In fact, Edgar and Pair (2005) argue that the prevailing knowledge on special education attrition is misleading, noting that special education teachers are moving out of special education, but data indicate that they are not leaving the profession, just moving to a different teaching assignment and/or school site.

Limitations

In examining the results of this study, the reader must keep in mind that this study was limited to early career special education teachers within one large urban multicultural Florida school district that had a formal induction program in place. Not all school districts in the United States have the same cultural make-up as Miami Dade County, and

there are still school districts in the United States that are only now putting induction components into place. The study also examined the perceptions of early career special education teachers regarding their induction experience at their school site. This is very different from large scale induction programs and initiatives provided by the district. Many of those activities take place outside of the regular school day, and as one interview participant stated, “they have programs available, but not everyone can go to those things.”

In addition, the results of this study are limited in their generalizability because the typical survey respondent for this study was a female Hispanic teacher teaching in a resource classroom at a high achieving urban elementary school. This differs from the typical special education teacher in the United States. Participants who are from racial/ethnic minorities may reflect varying interactive attributes and behaviors. Furthermore, the six special education teachers who participated in the follow up interview process were not typical beginning special education teachers. Becoming a special education teacher was a second career for each participant. Three of the six interview participants had been in the field of education, the other three participants changed from careers in the private sector. The overall level of confidence and expectations in these individuals could be attributed to maturity and life experience.

This study was intended to explore early career special education teachers’ perceptions of their induction experience at their school site. However, as the researcher began to collect data it became evident that mostly fourth and fifth year teachers were responding to the survey. Upon further review, the researcher determined that due to state budget cuts, the number of newly hired teachers had dropped dramatically. In fact, only

one new special education teacher was hired during the survey year. This occurrence had an impact on the results of the study. Induction support should be in place between a beginning teacher's first year through their third year. Due to budgetary and time constraints, this is not always the case. Given that the majority of the respondents may not have experienced induction components in the last few years; their perceptions may have been skewed. Furthermore, although the sample was comprised of early career special education teachers, there may have been some variation in the sample drawn due to the magnitude of roles the title "special education teacher" encompasses. Special Education teachers can range from Kindergarten to 12th grade. They can teach in a variety of settings (self-contained classrooms, varying exceptionalities/resource classrooms, and/or co-teaching/inclusion classrooms) and teach students with a multitude of disabilities and needs (mild to severe). This variability of teaching roles leads to a throng of experiences, affecting the generalizability of the study.

One of the study's research questions sought to determine if there was a significant difference in the perceptions of the value of typical induction components between early career special education teachers who planned on remaining in the field of special education and those that did not. The induction components included in the survey were derived from the literature as activities benefiting teaching; therefore, it stands to reason that the majority of the survey respondents would find all these activities valuable, resulting in minimal variability between the groups.

Recommendations

In a time when, "No Child Left Behind" is the educational mantra of the generation, a new mantra, "No Teacher Left Behind", must follow. After reviewing the

literature and analyzing the data from the survey along with the semi-structured interviews, several recommendations stand out. Of outmost importance is promoting a positive and supportive school climate in which all teachers and administrators share responsibility for the beginning special education teacher (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). This kind of supportive environment will alleviate the isolation felt by many special education teachers and create a sense of inclusiveness which is also one of the main goals in our schools concerning students.

There is a link between effective teaching and student achievement. Therefore, it stands to reason that there needs to be a shift in focus from "highly qualified" teachers to high quality teachers. In order to meet the needs of students in special education and enhance their educational experience and success, sufficient effort needs to be focused on identifying and providing individualized support to beginning special education teachers. Special education teachers are taught to differentiate to meet the individual needs of their students. Logically, then, shouldn't teachers be provided the same support when it comes to induction? The current focus on developing "highly qualified" teachers may be detracting the equally important task of developing high quality teachers.

The individual needs of beginning special education teachers can be met in a variety of ways. For example, these needs can be addressed through individualized induction activities within the general induction program tailored specifically for the needs of special education in additional to the regular induction activities. Furthermore, a support system which meets the emotional and practical needs of the early career teacher can be addressed by paying careful attention to the pairing of the beginning special education teacher with a mentor. Where possible, beginning special education teachers

should be paired with special education mentors. If this is not feasible, implementing a team approach to mentoring (e.g., a general education mentor at the school site, paired with a special education mentor at another location) should be considered.

Pugach and Winn (2011) point to co-teaching in inclusion classrooms as an untapped resource for induction. Repurposing this proven educational teaching strategy for induction has a two-fold effect. Co-teaching promotes a best teaching practice which fosters student achievement and it supports collaborative efforts among teachers which combat feelings of isolation felt by special education teachers. Pugach and Winn's findings were supported by this study's interviews, whereas two special education teachers specifically spoke of the positive effect co-teaching during their first year had on their current teaching practice.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study could be used as a foundation for future inquiry. A larger sample size from multiple induction programs might reveal new or confounding findings. Since there weren't many newly hired teachers in the study's preceding two years because of crippling economic issues faced by the district, this study is limited to the experiences and perceptions of early career special education teachers after their initial phase of induction, mostly those in years 3-5. The study could be repeated with special education teachers as they are experiencing induction (years 1-2); once the district begins to hire new special education teachers. Would the experience or perception be different? If so, what factors cause the difference?

One of the study's limitations included minimal variability between the groups in their perceptions of the value of the induction components on the survey instruments

since all of the components are valuable activities. Research could be conducted to examine, instead, the personal benefit early career special education teachers derived from each individual component.

Prior research suggests that there is a difference in the experience between traditional versus non-traditionally prepared teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). An analysis of each different type of preservice preparation could be performed to identify differences in perceptions. Such differences could be of interest to policy makers and administrators as they prepare induction programs for special education teachers. Rather than focusing on a debate over which pathway into special education teaching is better, perhaps increased focus should be placed on evaluating existing programs in terms of the quality of teachers they produce.

Along those lines, as state funding keeps getting cut, school districts are looking to save jobs by redirecting surplus general education teachers into open special education teaching positions. Although these may be veteran teachers, they are new to the field of special education, with all its unique needs. The question is asked; should these teachers be considered beginning special education teachers and receive some sort of induction experience? Additionally, research could examine how the needs of this particular group of teachers differ from the needs of newly hired, beginning special education teachers.

In education today, there is a need to tie research to student achievement outcome. Considering improved student outcomes is an objective of teacher induction, another possible extension of this study would be to track the learning gains of the students assigned to each special education teacher. Student interviews regarding early career teachers could also be considered in such a study.

Conducting research in these areas would add to and strengthen the findings of this study. In addition, this study should encourage those charged with the induction of teachers at a school site to engage in regular and systemic assessment and evaluations of their programs, ensuring that it is meeting the needs of all beginning teachers. The ultimate goal of teaching induction should be a positive effect on student achievement. Subsequently, induction needs to focus on meeting the individual needs of teachers in order for them to be successful in their practice and positively influence student achievement. Ultimately, as policymakers look to ensure that no child is left behind, they must consider that the most effective means to that goal is to ensure that no teacher is left behind.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

SURVEY INSTRUMENT
Beginning Special Education Teacher Induction Support

Directions:
This survey instrument will ask you to consider several aspects of your induction experience as a beginning special education teacher. Your individual responses will not be given to your school or school system, so please answer each question honestly. Your participation in this survey is valuable as we attempt to better understand beginning special education teachers' perceptions of school site induction support.

Part I: Demographic Information

1. Gender:
❑Female
❑Male

2. Race:
❑Black (not of Hispanic/Latino origin)
❑Asian
❑Caucasian (not of Hispanic/Latino origin)
❑Hispanic/Latino
❑Native American
❑Other

3. Number of years you've been a special education teacher _____

4. School Level Taught:
❑Pre-K
❑Elementary
❑Middle School
❑High School

5. Primary Teaching Assignment:
❑Consultation Teacher
❑Co-Teacher
❑VE/Resource Room Teacher
❑Self-Contained Classroom Teacher
❑Teacher at a Separate School

6. Teacher Preparation:
❑Traditional 4-year University Teacher Ed. Program
❑Alternative Certification

7. Educational Level:
- ❑Bachelor's Degree
- ❑Master's Degree
- ❑Educational Specialist Degree
- ❑Doctorate Degree

8. ESOL Endorsement:
- ❑Yes
- ❑No

9. School-Site Grade:
- ❑A
- ❑B
- ❑C
- ❑D
- ❑F

10. In three years, I see myself…
- ❑As a special education teacher
- ❑No longer in the profession of special education

11. Overall, how satisfied are you that the support you received during the first three years of your teaching career helped you develop into an effective special education teacher?
- ❑Very Satisfied
- ❑Satisfied
- ❑Somewhat Satisfied
- ❑Not Satisfied

12. I feel confident in my ability to teacher students with disabilities.
- ❑Strongly Agree
- ❑Agree
- ❑Disagree
- ❑Strongly Disagree

Part II: Activities, Assistance, and Support Provided for Beginning Special Education Teachers

For each of the following, please indicate whether the component listed was provided, and if so to what extent you perceive it to be valuable to your development as a special education teacher. If you answer, "Yes," indicating the practice was in place at your school, then provide your impression of the value of the induction practice listed in assisting beginning special education teachers.

1= Absolutely No Value, 2 = Little Value, 3 = Valuable, and 4 = Extremely Valuable

MENTORING ACTIVITIES RECEIVED AS A BEGINNING TEACHER	**Activity Provided**		**Perceived Value of Activity**
1. My mentor provided support and guidance in the areas of planning and instruction	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
2. My mentor helped me acclimate to the culture of the school community	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
3. My mentor was available for regularly scheduled observations	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
4. My mentor provided post-observation feedback on my progress in instructional techniques in a timely manner	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
5. My mentor modeled appropriate instructional techniques	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
6. My mentor maintained a professional and confidential relationship based on responsibility and trust	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
7. My mentor was accessible and willing to devote time and energy to assist me	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
8. My mentor provided assistance with special education compliance issues (IEP, paperwork, etc..)	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM ADMINISTRATION			
9. My administrator(s) provided release time for me to observe other teachers	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
10. My administrator(s) provided release time for me to meet with my mentor	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
11. My administrator(s) provided release time for me to attend training sessions	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
12. My administrator(s) assigned a special education mentor for me in the same grade level/subject area	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
13. My administrator(s) reduced my extra-curricular activities (bus duty, lunch duty,	Yes	No	1 2 3 4

committee participation, etc..)			
14. My administrator(s) demonstrated support, understanding and encouragement	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
15. My administrator(s) supports me in discipline matters	Yes	No	1 2 3 4

Part II: Continued

For each of the following, please indicate whether the component listed was provided, and if so to what extent you perceive it to be valuable to your development as a special education teacher. If you answer, "Yes," indicating the practice was in place at your school, then provide your impression of the value of the induction practice listed in assisting beginning special education teachers.

1= Absolutely No Value, 2 = Little Value, 3 = Valuable, and 4 = Extremely Valuable

SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM COLLEAGUES/PEERS	Activity Provided		Perceived Value of Activity
16. My colleagues and peers support and respect my work as a special education teacher	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
17. My colleagues and peers participate in information meetings for groups of new teachers to provide peer support	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
18. My colleagues and peers allow me to observe them teaching	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
19. My colleagues and peers provide constructive feedback on non-evaluative classroom observations	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
20. My colleagues and peers provide assistance/support to assist me in dealing with stressors encountered during my first years teaching	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
21. My colleagues and peers have a great deal of cooperative effort among each other	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES RECEIVED AS A BEGINNING TEACHER			
22. I attended an orientation session for new teachers prior to the school year beginning	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
23. I attended special sessions aimed at assisting beginning teachers during the school year	Yes	No	1 2 3 4
24. I attended school wide, mandatory professional development sessions for all teachers	Yes	No	1 2 3 4

which promoted collaboration among peers			
25. I attended professional development that was meaningful and relevant to special education issues	Yes	No	1 2 3 4

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