

Getting to Know Your Special Education Teachers

Results from the Texas Study of
Personnel Needs in Special Education

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Purpose of the Study

To study special education personnel needs in Texas schools through surveys

- ◆ Inform education stakeholders and policy makers regarding phenomenon of special education teacher retention and turnover
- ◆ Address state accountability and planning provisions pursuant to recent federal legislation

Goals of the Surveys

- Identify current staffing needs for special education teachers and for other special education professionals
 - ◆ Critical shortages and vacancy rates by position
- Assess status of recruitment and retention efforts for special education personnel
 - ◆ Effectiveness of current strategies
 - ◆ Barriers to recruitment and retention
- Assess the characteristics of special education personnel
 - ◆ Preparation, experience, and workload of personnel
 - ◆ Anticipated turnover of personnel

Comprehensive Personnel Study

- 4 Surveys
 - ◆ Human Resource Administrators
 - ◆ Special Education Administrators
 - ◆ **Special Education Teachers**
 - ◆ Other Special Education Professionals
 - ◆ Speech language pathologists
 - ◆ Educational diagnosticians
 - ◆ Therapists, licensed specialists in school psychology, etc.

- Multiple constituencies
 - ◆ Traditional, single districts
 - ◆ Districts participating in Special Education SSAs
 - ◆ Charter school districts

Research Methodology

- Designed and validated survey instruments
- Identified administrators, teachers, and other professionals in Texas public schools
- Conducted mailed surveys in Spring/Summer 2005
 - ◆ All Special Education Administrators
 - ◆ All Human Resource Administrators
 - ◆ **Random sample of full-time Special Education Teachers** and Other Professionals
- Encouraged participation in survey
 - ◆ Reminder e-mail for administrators
 - ◆ **Reminder post card, and drawing for gift card for teachers** and other professionals

Traditional Districts Surveyed and Response Rates

	Surveyed	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Human Resource Administrator Survey (Districts)			
Single Districts	344	140	40.7%
Special Education Administrator Survey (Districts)			
Single Districts	344	184	53.5%
Special Education Teacher Survey (Teachers)			
Single District Personnel	7,821	1,530	19.6%

Special Education Teachers

Part 1

Special Education Teacher Respondents: Summary Demographics

- 85.2% female, 22.0% minority
- 45.7 years old, 17.9% over 55
- 35.2% have masters or higher

Education Completed by Special Education Teachers

Education Level	% of SpEd Teachers (n=1,507)
Doctorate	1.1
Working toward a doctorate	2.2
Educational Specialist degree	2.1
Master's degree	29.9
Working toward a Master's degree	17.4
Bachelor's degree	45.0
Second Bachelor's degree	2.1
Associate's degree, or some college coursework	0.2
Other (typically 2 nd Master's degree)	0.1

Teaching Preparation Programs Completed by Special Education Teachers

Teacher Preparation Program	SpEd Teachers (n=1,522)
Undergraduate teacher training	61.2%
Graduate school teacher training	25.0%
Alternative certification program	32.1%
No teacher training completed	0.7%

Work Experience of Special Education Teachers

Type of Work Experience	SpEd Teachers (n=1,438)
Average years in profession	11.0 yrs.
Percent with 21+ yrs. in profession	25.0%
Average years in current job	6.8 yrs.
Percent with SpEd teaching	99.3%

Percent of Special Education Teachers Who Serve Each Age Group

Age Group of Students	% of SpEd Teachers (n=1,522)
1 – 4 years	10.7
5 – 8 years	46.5
9 – 12 years	62.6
13 – 16 years	45.1
17 – 20 years	22.1
21 years or older	8.1

What are the characteristics of the students served by special education teacher respondents?

Primary Disability of Students Served by SpEd Teacher Respondents	% of Students Served (total=27,140)
Specific learning disability	57.9
Emotional disturbance	9.1
Mental retardation	7.6
Autism	4.3
Speech or language impairment	4.1
Developmental delay	1.3

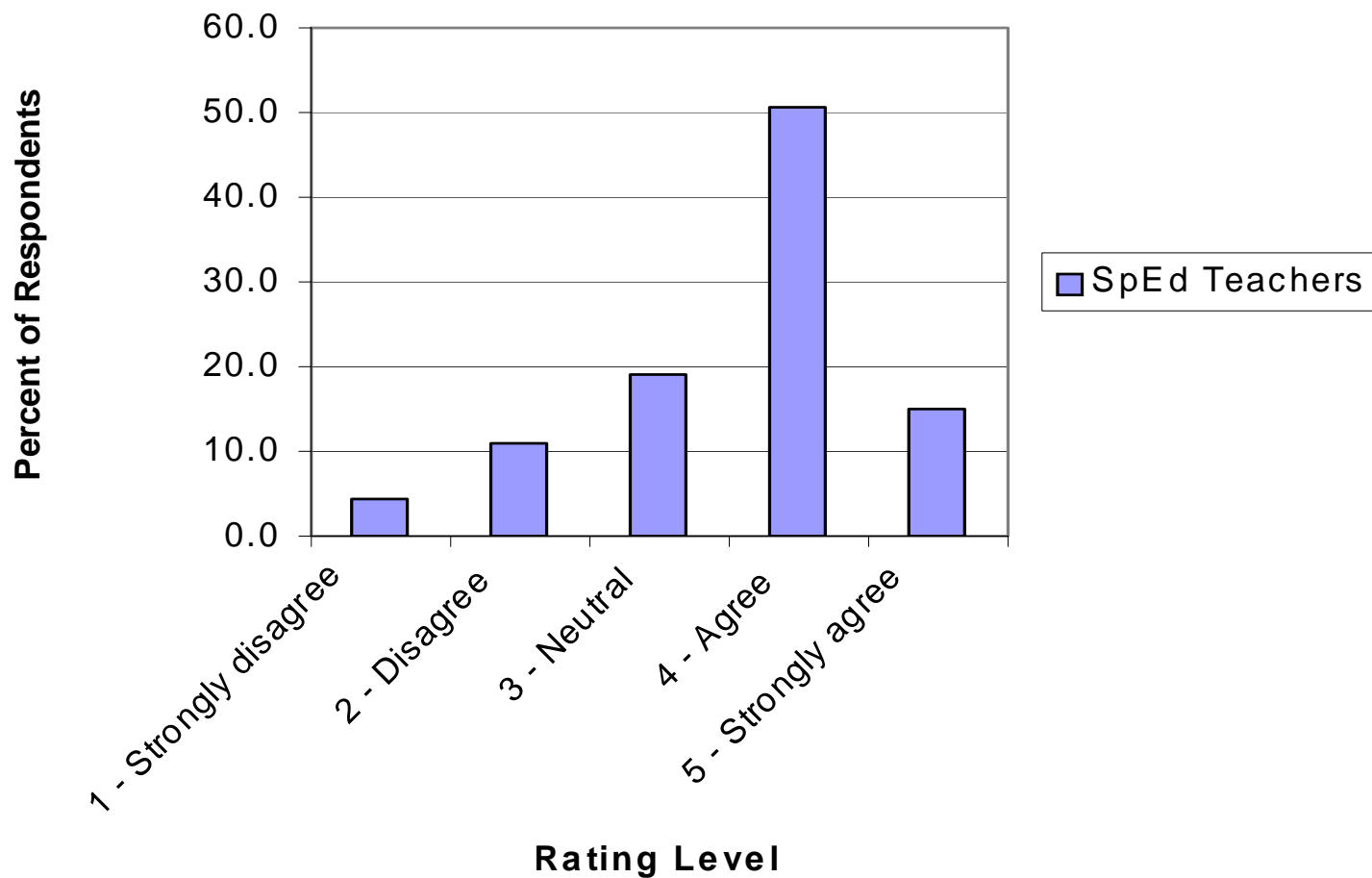
Percent of Special Education Teachers Who Reported Student Case Load

Student/Case Load (Number of Students Served)	% of SpEd Teachers (n=1,102)
1 – 10	33.9
11 – 20	28.2
21 – 30	15.2
31 – 40	7.1
41 – 50	5.2
51 – 60	3.8
61 – 100	4.4
101 or more	2.1
Avg. No. Students Per Special Education Teacher	25 Students

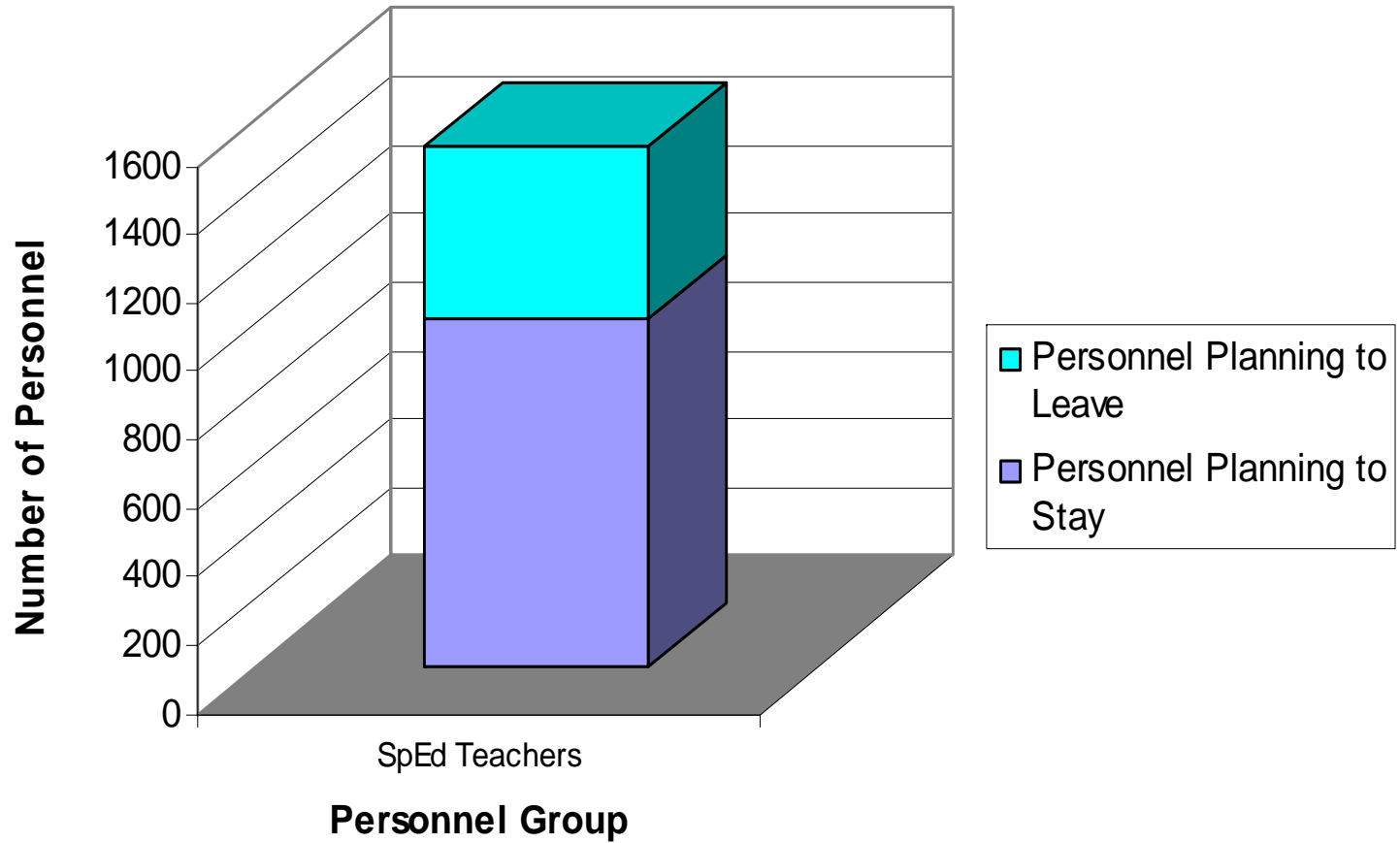
Monthly Indirect Student Services Workload for Special Education Personnel: Average hours per month

Non-Instructional Tasks	SpEd Teachers Avg. Hrs.
Planning	18.6
Paperwork	16.9
ARD committees	7.3
Meeting with Special Education Teachers	4.4
Meeting with General Education Teachers	4.3
School committees	3.0
SpEd dept. meetings	2.6
Contact with community	2.2
Provide in-service	1.0
Total hrs. for tasks	57.9

Job Satisfaction of Special Education Personnel



Special Education Personnel and Plans to Stay or Leave



Plans for Next Year: Percent of Leavers with a Destination

Destination of Leavers	SpEd Teachers (n=507)
SpEd position in another district	19.1
SpEd position in agency or hospital	2.8
Non-SpEd teaching in another district	5.3
Non-SpEd teaching in current district	12.4
Administration in current district	14.0
Administration in another district	2.8
Outside education	8.7
Retirement	10.7
Other	24.3



MODEL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER RETENTION

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Administrator Surveys

Most Effective Strategies for Recruiting Special Education Personnel (ratings of 2.5 or higher on 4-pt. scale for single district, human resource administrators)

- Post positions on the Internet
- Attend or sponsor job fairs
- Provide supplements, stipends, or signing bonuses*
- Provide attractive benefit packages*
- Contact in-state colleges and universities
- Streamline the hiring process*
- Offer financial incentives for becoming certified or credentialed in special education*
- Send special education personnel on recruiting trips*
- Contact personnel in other Texas schools and agencies
- Contact out-of-state colleges and universities*

Most Effective Retention Strategies for Special Education Personnel (rating of 3.0 or greater on 4-pt. scale for single district, special education administrators)

- Adequate access to instructional resources and teaching materials
- Release time for professional development
- Financial support for professional development
- Adequate classroom space and equipment
- Access to reliable computer equipment for paperwork
- Adequate support from paraprofessionals
- Support regarding legal issues
- Clerical support to assist with paperwork*
- Opportunities to discuss common issues with other special education personnel in district

Critical Shortages in Special Education Staffing

Special Education Teachers

- Teachers working with students in resource or content mastery

(Potential shortages emerging for teachers working with students who have adaptive behavior issues)

Other Special Education Professionals

- Speech language pathologists
- Educational diagnosticians

(Potential shortages emerging for bilingual speech pathologists, and bilingual specialists in school psychology)

- Special Education Paraprofessionals



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Special Education Teachers

Part 2

Job Satisfaction – Dependent Variable Used in Regression Analysis

- Chance to do what I do best.
- Good fringe benefits.
- Pleasant physical surroundings.
- Free from conflicting demands.
- Good supervision.
- Fair promotions.
- Personable co-workers.
- Good pay.

Predicting Job Satisfaction: Variable List

Control Variables	Personal and Professional	Job Characteristics	Administrative Characteristics
Special education ratio	Professional development hours in 7 key areas	Special education students served	School environment
Economically disadvantaged ratio	Years in special education teaching	Indirect student services hours	Professional support network
District size	Education level	Working with students	Support for special education instruction
Grade level	Teacher pay	Classroom facilities	
District			

Predicting Job Satisfaction: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Control Variables	Personal and Professional	Job Characteristics	Administrative Characteristics
Special education ratio	Professional development hours in 7 key areas	Special education students served	School environment (.36)
Economically disadvantaged ratio	Years in special education teaching(-.08)	Indirect student services hours	Professional support network (.13)
District size	Education level	Working with students (.10)	Support for special education instruction (.23)
Grade level	Teacher pay	Classroom facilities (.10)	
District			

What can administrators and board members do to improve the School Environment?

School Environment

- Teachers are involved in decision making.
- Campus administrator helps resolve classroom issues.
- Campus administrator provides information and advice.
- Policies are applied consistently.
- Principal understands the challenges and rewards of SpEd.
- Administrator considers student needs and teacher capabilities when placing students.
- Evaluative feedback helps teachers improve instruction.
- Principal is knowledgeable about SpEd laws and procedures.

Conclusions: Special Education Teachers

- Highly educated with extensive experience
- Majority of students served have specific learning disabilities
- Spend 1.4 weeks each month on non-instructional tasks
- Generally are satisfied with their jobs, but one-third have plans to leave the following year
- School environment contributes significantly to job satisfaction

Implications

1. Creating an environment that supports special education instruction will likely improve the administrative environment for all teachers.
2. Adequate pay is important, but school climate appears to be a stronger influence on job satisfaction for special education teachers.

Recommendations

Improve recruitment processes so campuses can select special educators more likely to be retained.

Investigate opportunities to strengthen campus leadership and supervision for instruction.

Expand leadership skills of district special education administrators.

Create better informed parents and general education teachers relative to special education topics.

Work to ensure that special education teachers can spend uninterrupted time with their students, in adequate classroom facilities.

Thank you!

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