

## Special Educator Supply and Teacher Quality: The Critical Role of Teacher Induction

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## The Quality versus Quantity Tension

Chronic shortages make focusing on quality difficult:

- ❑ Special education has the greatest teacher shortage (AFT, 1999)
- ❑ 98% of nation's school districts report shortages of special educators (ERIC, 2001; Fideler, Foster, & Schwartz, 2000)
- ❑ 135,000 more teachers will be needed between 1998 and 2008 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1999)
- ❑ Shortages are worse in our nation's poorest schools (Ingersoll, 2001)

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## Factors Contributing to Shortages in Special Education

- Increase in students identified with disabilities
- Issue of supply and demand:
  - Insufficient number of graduates to meet the demand

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## Teacher Attrition: Increasing Demand and Reducing Quality

- ❑ 6.1% of special educators and 5.7% of general educators left the classroom
- ❑ 7.4% of special educators transferred to general education
  - ....whereas only 0.7% of general educators transferred to special education
- ❑ Net loss of special educators is 13.5% compared to 6.4% of general educators. Results in net loss of approx. 22,000 special educators (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, & Barkanic, 1998)

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## Factors Contributing to Attrition

- Certification Status
- Insufficient Preparation
- Poor Salary
- Lack of Administrative Support
- Role Issues
- Negative School Climate
- Experience/Age
- Stress/Dissatisfaction

(Brownell, Sindelar, Bishop, Langley, & Seo, 2003)

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## Stress/Support

*My class load was 20 [and I had] no help, and no administrative back-up. Every time I would ask for some help I was told I was the one with the special ed degree. I had to keep them in the class because they did not want them sent to the dean. I got no support. I was told I had to use the county adopted books, but I was never given any resources. And the books they chose were far beyond my kids' capabilities. I worked in a VE classroom-EH and LD- and before I left they were sticking in EMH kids. Two subjects per period.*

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## Uncertified/Stress

*I am not certified ESE, I had to take classes and stuff but I was put in that position as a temp placement... When I was put in that position the people that I talked to at the county office said go ahead and take it. I kept telling them I was not sure I could do this, I had never done this before. [They said], "Oh no, we are going to help you, give you an aide. Any supplies you may need, we will do anything we can to help you out." Then they put me in there and that was the last I saw or heard of anybody. It was like, "sink or swim sweetheart."*

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## Uncertified/Demands/Isolation

*There were too many preps I had to do. I had no aide. When I accepted the position, I was told I would be co-teaching. It was also my first position teaching. Then after I had the job a week, they pulled me and said, "You're teaching them all, all by yourself!" and I was lost and I just felt like I was unprepared for it. And I had a very big discipline problem. At one time I had up to 15 kids in my class.*

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## Why Are Beginning Teachers More Vulnerable?

- More likely to leave teaching
- Less likely to be fully-certified
- Struggle with demands of teaching
- Greater isolation from colleagues
- Insufficient curricular and technical resources
- Role issues
- Poor school climate
- Lack of professional growth opportunities

(Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore, 2004)

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## How Do We Help Beginning Special Education Teachers?

- *Beginning teacher Induction:* Successful transition from teacher preparation to becoming a classroom teacher
  - The socialization process to the teaching profession
  - Adjustment to school climate and system
  - Development of effective teaching skills

(Berry, 2003; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000)

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## Impacts/Outcomes of Teacher Induction Programs

- Teachers participating in high quality induction programs are less likely to leave.
- Quality induction programs reflect environments that promote learning communities--» increase teaching quality
- Quality teaching leads to improved student performance/achievement (more research needed)

(Berry, 2003; NGA Center for Best Practices, 2002; SRI, 2000)

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## Key Elements of Quality Induction Program

- Clear goals and purpose: Clear understanding among beginning teachers, service providers, and administrators
- Mentoring
- Opportunities for interaction between new/experienced teachers
- Professional Development
- Formative and summative evaluation

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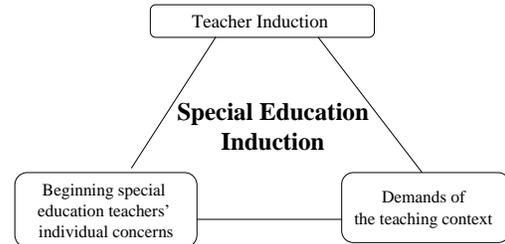
## Key Elements of Quality Induction Program (cont'd)

- Culture of shared professional development
- De-emphasized evaluation
- Diversified content
  - Instructional content
  - Pedagogical content
  - Psychological support
- Fiscal and political support

(Brownell et al., 2003; Griffin et al., 2004)

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## Design Considerations for Special Education Induction Program



(Rosenberg, Griffin, Kilgore, & Carpenters, 1997) 14

## Effective Features of the Mentoring in Special Education

- Mentors specific to special educators
  - Matching grade level, content areas, teaching model, disability categories, teaching style, and gender
  - Considering close physical proximity
- Mentor Characteristics
  - Having knowledge of special education (regulations and pedagogy)
  - Combining personal and professional characteristics effectively
  - Playing non-evaluative roles

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## Effective Features of the Mentoring in Special Education

- Content
  - Importance of personal and emotional support (Esp. for the first year)
  - System information (School, District, & Special education)
  - Task or problem-focused support
  - Critical reflection on teaching practice
  - Materials/resources

(Griffin et al., 2004; Whitaker, 2000; 2003)

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## Types of Teacher Induction Programs

- Formal support
  - Fostering teacher learning
- Informal support
  - Creating a positive work climate

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## Formal Beginning Teacher Support

- Statewide comprehensive programs
  - Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST)
  - California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA)
- Higher Education/District-based programs
  - Santa Cruz New Teacher Project
- CEC Mentoring Induction Project

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## Statewide: Connecticut's BEST Program

- Mentoring, portfolio assessment, and professional development
- Linked to statewide three-tiered certification system
  - Beginning/Provisional/Professional certification
- Mentoring: regular meetings, classroom observation
- Highly structured portfolio
  - Composed of lesson plans and reflective journals, videos, commentaries, and student work
  - Reviewed by two trained assessors
- Content-specific seminar (25-30 hours)
- Initial pass rate of 85-92%
- No teacher shortage reported

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## Statewide: California's BTSA Program

- Affiliated with *the California Task Force for Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention of Special Education Teachers*
- Daily (on-site) support from a trained mentor
- Monthly formative assessments
- Individual induction plan
- 96% retention rate for the 1st year teachers
- Only fully certified new teachers can participate, leaving 42,000 underprepared novices without this type of support

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## Local: Santa Cruz New Teacher Project

- Collaboration between UC Santa Cruz and school districts
- Recognizing the needs of different induction program for special educators (2004: 5th year)
- Mentoring and Formative assessment
- New Teacher Advisors
  - 3 exemplary special education teachers (13 caseload)
  - Full/part-time release for working with novices
  - Weekly-based meetings: Comprehensive support provided
  - Class-based support (e.g., observation, co-teaching)
  - Non-evaluative role

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## Local: Santa Cruz New Teacher Project

- Mentor training and weekly meetings
- Formative assessment
  - Tailoring the induction program based on special teachers' needs
  - Using a set of formative assessment tools (Logs, Student work analysis, Community resource guide, Class profile, Individual learning plan etc.)
  - Implementing assessment flexibly
- 88% of beginning teacher retention
- Higher student achievement

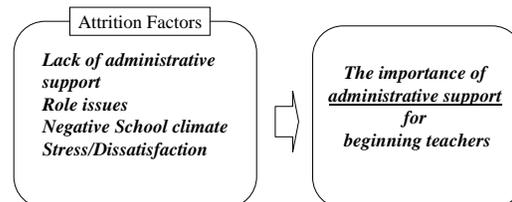
(Marilyn Torp, personal conversation) 22

## Mentoring Induction Project CEC (OSEP Funded)

- Mentoring Induction Principles and Guidelines
  - Developed for districts to establish or strengthen mentoring programs
  - Provides rationale for mentoring
  - Principles (Research-based, available to all beginning teachers, mentoring)
  - Guidelines (Roles for mentors, mentees, principals, and districts)
  - Implementation checklist
  - Available at [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)

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## Informal Beginning Teacher Support



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### A View from the Field: Administrative Support for Special Education Teachers

- Creating a positive school climate
  - “*Keeping the main thing the main thing*”
- Valuing teachers as professionals
  - “*I just need a say*”
- Creating a broad base of teacher support
  - “*I just want to teach*”

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### The Role of Leadership for Beginning Teachers

- Establish a climate of collaboration and support by
  - Fostering ongoing teacher learning
  - Buffering teachers from tasks that interfere with teaching
  - Promoting helping relationships among staff
  - Facilitating shared decision-making
  - Establishing common goals
  - Providing extra support for beginning teachers

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### Contact Information

- Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE)
  - Website: [www.copsse.org](http://www.copsse.org)  
(Additional resources available)
  - Email : [abishop@coe.ufl.edu](mailto:abishop@coe.ufl.edu)

