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High Leverage Professional Development Topics that Support the Retention of Special Educators

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High Leverage Professional Development Topics that Support the Retention of Special

Educators

A Dissertation by

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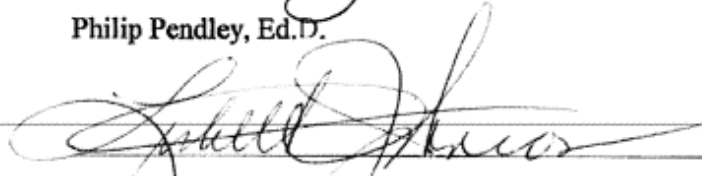
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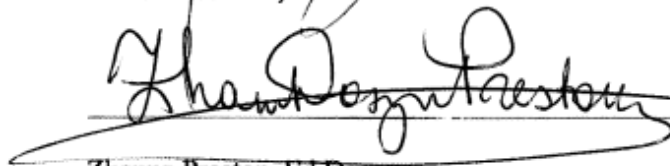
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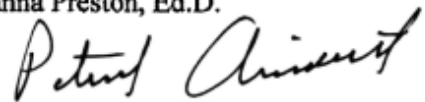
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ABSTRACT

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Purpose: The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how experienced

special education teachers rate and describe the importance of professional development

topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for

Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs,

and to determine how the ratings of the different groups (preschool, elementary, middle,

high school, and adult transition grade level ranges) compare to one another.

Methodology: The current study is a mixed-method descriptive comparative design,

utilizing both quantitative and qualitative survey methodology. A quantitative approach

was used to rate experienced special educator's professional development perception of

different professional development topics and how their experience with these topics

impact their retention in the field of special education. A qualitative approach was then

applied to conduct follow-up interviews with special educators regarding the influence

their professional development has had on their retention in the field. Such information

best aligned to the research questions and provided a contribution to this research area.

Findings: There were two major research findings: High leverage practices professional

development topics positively impact special educator retention. Additionally, grade level

influenced ratings of the importance of professional development in high leverage

practices.

Conclusion: The most evident research conclusion is that professional development in high leverage practices helps to retain special education teachers. Additionally, professional development for special educators should be differentiated for staff based on their instructional grade band.

Recommendations for Action: Research conclusions inspired the following six implications for urgent action at various influential levels, including: (a) teacher education programs, (b) teacher induction programs, (c) school districts, (d) regional levels, (e) state level, and (f) federal level.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The current state of affairs, with a shortage of experienced special educators driven by poor retention, has put our most vulnerable students in the hands of new and underprepared teachers (Freedberg & Harrington, 2017). Researchers have found many reasons why special education teachers leave the profession or change school districts, including difficulty in learning to manage the job stressors and the lack of support with professional development and resources (Freedberg & Harrington, 2017). Retaining teachers is more economical than hiring new staff (Hornick-Lockard, 2019). Additionally, new teachers who receive high levels of support and mentoring are more likely to stay in the profession (Hornick-Lockard, 2019).

This teacher shortage comes during a time of evolution within organizational hiring practices and employee needs. Findings show that organizations with a commitment to investing in their employees' well-being and development outperformed others in terms of business outcomes (Harter, 2018). One researcher noted that districts could limit turnover by focusing on preventative measures such as targeted professional development (Butler, 2008).

Students with disabilities require highly prepared and skilled teachers to maximize student outcomes (Boyd et al., 2009; Brownell, 2020). A history of low performance levels for students with disabilities has propelled the work of identifying high leverage practices (HLP) within our special educators (McLeskey et al., 2017). The complexity of educating students with disabilities should not be understated as students vary widely in their presentation of complex learning differences, performance levels, and expression of social, emotional, and behavioral needs (McLeskey et al., 2017). There

are also many other responsibilities of special educators that require initial and ongoing training, such as understanding legal obligations, development of individualized educational program (IEP), and local practices to name a few (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000). Collective action is needed to realize higher standards in teacher readiness and professional development (McLeskey et al., 2017).

Background

The field of special education is complex and nuanced. Special educators must gain, maintain, and expand on knowledge from many areas of study. Not only must they learn what general education teachers know, they must also learn about all subject matter across all grade levels of the students served and then applicable educational strategies for students of all abilities and needs (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000). Furthermore, they are responsible for understanding the legal responsibilities and requirements of educating students with disabilities, developing accommodations and modifications to the general education curriculum and assessments, and implementing many other legally required functions of a special education teacher (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000). There are elements that individuals receive training on during their college coursework and prior to employment. This information is also supplemented after employment through the onboarding process by hiring districts that have varying procedures for legal implementation, ranging practices and resources devoted to professional development.

Pre-Employment Training

College Programs

University programs for special educators are numerous and vary in focus and specialty. In general, each program's coursework is driven by the teacher credentialing

requirements and professional standards of their state. Individuals must complete an education specialist program and obtain a baccalaureate or higher degree from a regionally-accredited college or university (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). Additionally, individuals must satisfy course work requirements in three areas: (a) basic skills, (b) U.S. Constitution coursework, and (c) subject matter course work requirements in either single or multiple subject areas (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). Finally, to obtain their preliminary credential, individuals must pass the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). As each state has variations in credentialing requirements, individuals who participated in out-of-state college programs must meet minimum requirements in the state they seek to teach in (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021).

Field placements are an important part of college training programs that are comprised of a supervised experience for the trainee within the school district setting. According to a recent literature review on field experiences, all included 10-15 weeks of school-based placements and training in the frameworks of inclusion, collaboration, professional standards, teacher skills, and student populations (Nagro & deBettencourt, 2017). In these experiences, most teachers in training were able to perform small group intervention, assess students, collect student data, design and implement interventions and support behavioral planning (Nagro & deBettencourt, 2017). During these learning activities, teacher candidates were supervised and created portfolios and videotaped lessons, self-evaluations and reflections, and received feedback on their performance. (Nagro & deBettencourt, 2017).

Once coursework and fieldwork are completed, new teacher candidates must seek state certification. In California, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing issues a two-level special education teaching credential: Preliminary credential, once basic credential requirements are met and the clear credential, once all credential requirements have been fully completed- usually through affiliation with a school district's induction program. Furthermore, authorizations allow new special education teachers to conduct educational assessments, provide instruction, and special education support to individuals according to specialization criteria (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). Several examples of authorizations include: Autism spectrum disorders and teaching English learners. Furthermore, specialties are outlined in serving students with:

- Mild/moderate disabilities

- Moderate/severe disabilities

- Deaf and hard of hearing

- Visual impairments

- Physical and health impairments

- Early childhood special education

- Language and academic development

Credential requirements must be renewed every five years.

Post-Employment Training

Onboarding Process

Most organizations use new-employee orientations —either in person or do so digitally (Bauer, 2010). Organizations that participate in a formal onboarding process focused on explicitly communicating the company's mission, individual roles, norms,

and expected behaviors, are more effective than those that do not (Bauer, 2010).

Additionally, participating in a thorough onboarding process is predictive of a staff

members increased levels of commitment, satisfaction, and retention (Chao et al., 1994;

Klein & Weaver, 2000; Vandenberghe et al., 2010). For special educators, the school

district onboarding process must be explicit and provide role clarity (Billingsley, 2004).

These findings demonstrate the value of providing meaningful support to staff on the

organization's practices and culture when onboarding new special education teachers or

any new staff as critical to their success and retention.

Teacher Induction Programs Post-Employment

Once hired, teacher induction programs are another source of support and training

for new teachers. In California, the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System

was created to acknowledge and address the intensive needs of first-year teachers (CA

Education Code, 1998). Its objective is "to build on the preparation that precedes initial

certification, to transform academic preparation into practical success in the classroom,

[and] to retain greater numbers of capable beginning teachers" (CA Education Code,

1998, p. 1). The law identifies that school districts must develop and implement

individualized support, assessment, and feedback of beginning teachers, as necessary for

professional certification and based on the California Standards for the Teaching

Profession (CA Education Code, 1998). The induction program is differentiated for

special educators and requires supervising teachers to be of like credentialing to enhance

the personalization of support. During their induction program, the school district liaisons

a personalized course of study to address all professional standards aligned to a teacher's

special education credential be with students with mild/moderate disabilities, moderate/ severe disabilities, Deaf and Hard of Hearing population, etc.

Ongoing Special Education Teacher Training Post-Employment

At the school district level, professional development offerings vary further and few regulations outline or govern school districts professional development practices (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). Although state and federal law dictate legal obligations, there are many variations in who performs what tasks and when these tasks are to be performed, while district staff are meeting special education requirements. At the district level, case management responsibilities vary between and within the school district based on the resources available and organizational norms (Billingsley, 2004). Furthermore, school communities are complex and have their own histories of practice (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). In fact, special educators cite the extent of documentation and paperwork as one of the high-ranking reasons for job dissatisfaction and attrition (Billingsley, 2004).

School districts are encouraged (but not required) to establish professional growth opportunities across a range of topics that support the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. California Education Code 44277: Professional Development, acknowledges the importance of professional growth through a teacher's career and encourages teachers to engage in ongoing professional learning (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). Ongoing training is necessary for all special educators and is a part of professional teaching standards (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2000),

> [E]ffective professional development programs are dynamic and integrated. They address the organizational, systemic, and cultural supports needed (the context);

the way content-specific knowledge, pedagogy, skills, and attitudes are acquired (the process); and the content-specific knowledge, pedagogy, skills, and attitudes needed (the content). Continuous evaluation of student achievement, relative to high academic standards, must be a driving force in shaping professional development plans. The needs of the individual, groups of individuals, school(s), the school district, and the state's educational agency must also be addressed. (p. 2)

Relevant Professional Development Topics for Special Educators

Since the 1958 passage of Public Law (PL) 85-926 that enacted the first version of the Individuals with Educational Disabilities Act, discretionary federal funding has been generally allocated for preparation and professional development of special educators (California Department of Education [CDE], Special Education Division, 2021). Each year, topics change to align with current legislative and practice needs. Professional development requirements are loosely defined and let training programs and local educational areas adapt training to suit their needs (Kleinhammer-Tramill et al., 2010).

The state and regional impact related to professional development emphasis varies as considerably. Currently, within the California Department of Education (CDE), the Special Education Division (2021), has placed a legislative emphasis on dyslexia and early preschool intervention, though advertised CDE professional learning opportunities are limited currently quite possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDE, Special Education Division indicates that staff development programs are identified as one of

many areas that regional Special Education Local Planning Agencies (SELPAs) support school districts (2021).

California's Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) focus their support to ensure school districts maintain legal adherence to laws and regulations. SELPA's annually maintain a local plan outlining a continuum of supports to local district and their students (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021). Within the current annual plan template, there are no explicit requirements for professional development audience, content, duration, and/or frequency of offering. Despite the lack of requirement for professional development within the annual plan, each SELPAs has their own operations committee which arranges and host various professional development opportunities available to districts within their boundaries and for a cost, members of other SELPAs. These professional development opportunities are typically shared within the regional SELPA level and then are advertised throughout the county offices of education. As such, training topics for special educators vary greatly by local and regional practices, as well as with the advent of new case law or professional advancements.

High Leverage Instructional Practices

In general, districts vary widely in their instructional, curriculum, and assessment practices and usages and the professional development they provide in these areas. Although some districts chose to implement robust training in high leverage instructional and assessment practices, there are no structured training requirements or outcomes that districts for special educators maintain. Teachers themselves are encouraged through their professional standards to seek resources to further their development in these areas (Brownell, 2020). Online resources commonly accessed for this purpose are:

- The Council for Exceptional Children

- Collaboration for Effective Educator Development Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center (Council for Exceptional Children [CEC] & Collaboration for Effective Educator Development Accountability and Reform [CEEDAR] Center, 2019)

- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Center (Brownell, 2020)

Not all instructional practices are created equal. In recent years, the CEC has worked to identify 22 HLP in the four domains of: (a) special education assessment, (b) collaboration, (c) instruction, and (d) social/emotional/behavior (McLeskey et al., 2017). Currently, there are no requirements for school districts to provide training in these areas or to direct a specified amount of training on the California State Standards.

School districts need to prioritize strategic and systematic professional development to support the complex needs of special educators. School districts vary widely with their offerings of special education professional development and few regulations outline or govern ongoing professional development. A gap in the research exists in identifying which school district professional development practices reinforce special education teacher's effectiveness. Furthermore, the current study seeks to identify which targeted, high leverage professional development topics and methods positively support a special educator's onboarding experience and ultimately their retention.

Statement of the Research Problem

Although some progress has been made in addressing the special educator shortage, continued progress is needed (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). In a national study, a great majority of school districts (98%) reported shortages of special educators and of

those, 37% began with less than the minimum credentials requirements (Billingsley, 2004). The shortage and its impact have continued to be studied from many perspectives (Billingsley, 2004; Freedberg & Harrington, 2017). As many as 40% of new special educators choose to leave their careers within the first three years of teaching, which is notably higher than the 25.5 % attrition rates of general education teachers (Billingsley, 2004; Kaufman & Ring, 2011; Luekens et al., 2004).

Special educator attrition and the resulting impact of shortages are attributed to many factors. Most notably, a review of the literature has commonly cited the high workload requirements and a lack of preparedness for the many complexities of the job (Billingsley, 2004; Freedberg & Harrington, 2017). Special educators also cite the many roles and responsibilities and their lack of training and support in carrying them out successfully (Billingsley, 2004; Hester et al., 2020).

The same national legislation governs each district for students with disabilities, but state, county, district, and school procedures and norms vary widely in nuanced and sometimes unspecified ways that special educators must learn (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). Collective action is needed to reframe professional development for special educators that better secures their readiness, satisfaction, and retention (McLeskey et al., 2017). Although ongoing training is necessary, little is understood about which training topics for new special education teachers are deemed most valuable in helping them stay in the field.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult

transition program grade level ranges rate the importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs, and to determine how the ratings of the different groups compare to one another. A second purpose was to describe the impact these professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center have on experienced special education teachers' in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition grade level ranges decision to remain in the profession and how the descriptions of the different groups compare to one another.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed within the current research study:

1. How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate the importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs?

2. How do the ratings for special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?

3. How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges describe the impact of professional development topics identified as high leverage

practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and

CEEDAR Center on their decision to remain in the profession?

4. How do the descriptions for the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and

adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?

Significance of the Problem

The current shortage of fully prepared and experienced special education teachers

compromises the safety and progress of our most vulnerable students, students with

disabilities (Freedberg & Harrington, 2017). Retaining teachers through investments of

professional development and support is a noble action of district leaders and from a

pragmatic standpoint, retaining staff is less costly than hiring and training new teachers

(Hornick-Lockard, 2014). Districts must address the special educator retention crisis with

a sense of urgency and focus on preventative measures to recruit and retain special

educators (Butler, 2008).

In heeding this well documented call to action, school districts need to prioritize

strategic and systematic planning to address the targeted professional development needs

of their special educators. School districts vary widely with their offerings of special

education professional development and few regulations outline or govern ongoing

professional development. Additionally, professional development for special educators

can take many forms, across many strands of practice, and can vary year to year based on

different funding models and resources. The professional development focus can also be

impacted unpredictably by new legal findings, procedural requirements, and changing

situational, state, and local initiatives throughout the school year.

A gap in the research exists in identifying which school district professional development practices and topics leverage special education teacher's effectiveness. Furthermore, little is known as to which targeted, high leverage professional development topics and methods positively support a special educator's onboarding experience and effectiveness and, ultimately, their retention in the field. Careful preparation of our special educators will ultimately address some of their primary reasons for attrition, not feeling sufficiently trained and supported. Evidence based professional development practices for onboarding special educators would be invaluable knowledge for resource limited school districts seeking to leverage professional development practices and topics to improve special educator's effectiveness and retention.

Definitions

To support common understanding, this section defines the terms utilized within the current study.

Effective professional development. "Structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 2).

Experienced special education teacher. The current study defines an experienced special education teacher as an individual who has completed three or more years of employment within the special education field within a classroom or itinerant special education teaching position. They are considered fully credentialed in their field of practice. This will include special educators with titles such as resource specialist, special day class teacher as well as itinerant teachers of adapted physical education, deaf and hard of hearing, and orientation and mobility.

High leverage practice. An evidence based instructional approach or intervention for use by special educators to increase student outcomes (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High leverage practices (HLP). The CEEDAR and the CEC partnered together to identify a set of high-leverage practices for use by special educators to increase student outcomes (McLeskey et al., 2017). In total, 22 practices were organized into four key practices, including: (a) collaboration, (b) assessment, (c) social/emotional/ behavioral, and (d) instruction (McLeskey et al., 2017).

Teacher retention. There are many definitions of teacher retention. For the purposes of this study, retention pertains to teachers who have either remained in special education teaching assignment and school as last year as well as those that transfer to another special education teaching assignment within the same school district. (Billingsley, 2004).

Delimitations

Delimitations are factors that the researcher develops to limit the scope and boundaries of a study (Simon & Goes, 2013). This mixed method study was delimited to special education teachers in San Diego, California county school districts meeting the following criteria:

- They are a special educator with three or more years of experience
- They are employed within five of the participating school districts
- They consent to participate in the study

Organization of the Study

The current study is organized into five chapters of research. Chapter I encompassed an introduction to the research topics as well as outlined the study's

purpose, questions, and methodology. Chapter II included a detailed review of pertinent

literature. Chapter III focused on research design including a description of population,

sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis procedures, and potential

limitations. Chapter IV analyzed the research findings of the current study in relation to

the research questions. Chapter V interpreted and related findings to the research

questions as well as provided recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

We are in a "severe and deepening shortage of special education teachers" (Ondrasek et al., 2020) leaving students with the most intensive needs to be served by new and inexperienced teachers (Freedberg & Harrington, 2017; Ondrasek et al., 2020). Researchers have found many reasons why special education teachers leave the profession or change school districts, including difficulty in learning to manage the job stressors and the lack of support with professional development and resources (Freedberg & Harrington, 2017).

> Attrition of special education teachers is associated with inadequate preparation and professional development, challenging working conditions that include large caseloads, overwhelming workload and compliance obligations, inadequate support, and compensation that is too low to mitigate high costs of living and student debt loads. (Ondrasek et al., 2020, p. 3)

Retaining teachers is more economical than hiring new staff, whereas new teachers who receive high levels of support and mentoring tend to stay in the profession (Hornick-Lockard, 2019).

This teacher shortage comes during a time of evolution within organizational hiring practices and employee needs. Findings show that organizations with a commitment to investing in their employees' well-being and development outperformed others in terms of business outcomes, including attendance, retention, engagement, and productivity (Harter, 2018). One researcher noted that districts could limit turnover by focusing on preventative measures such as targeted training (Butler, 2008).

Students with disabilities require highly prepared and skilled teachers to maximize student outcomes (Boyd et al., 2009; Brownell, 2020). A history of low performance levels for students with disabilities has propelled the work of identifying HLP within our special educators (McLeskey et al., 2017). The complexity of educating students with disabilities should not be understated as students vary widely in their presentation of complex learning differences, performance levels, and expression of social, emotional, and behavioral needs (McLeskey et al., 2017). There are also many other responsibilities of special educators that require initial and ongoing training, such as understanding legal obligations, development of IEPs, and local practices to name a few (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000). "Collective action among those who prepare teachers and provide continuing professional development is needed to enact this new vision of teacher preparation and professional development" (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 10). Currently, there are no requirements for school districts to provide training in HLP practices in special education or to direct a specified amount of training on the California state standards.

The Role of the Special Educator

The field of special education is complex and nuanced. The complexity is confounded by high turnover rates and an influx of new hires (Freedberg & Harrington, 2017). Special educators must gain, maintain, and expand on knowledge from many areas of study. Not only must they learn what general education teachers know, they must learn about all subject matter, across all grade levels, as well as the applicable educational strategies for students of all abilities and needs (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000). Furthermore, they are responsible for understanding the legal responsibilities and requirements of

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educating students with disabilities, developing accommodations and modifications to the general education curriculum and assessments, and implementing many other legally required functions of a special education teacher (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000).

There are elements that individuals receive training on during their college coursework and prior to employment. This information is also supplemented after employment by hiring districts that have varying procedures for legal implementation and ranging practices and resources devoted to professional development.

Special Education Teacher Training Programs (Pre-Employment Training)

University programs for special educators are numerous and vary in focus and specialty. In general, each program's coursework is driven by the teacher credentialing requirements and professional standards of their state. Individuals must complete an education specialist program and obtain a baccalaureate or higher degree from a regionally-accredited college or university (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). Additionally, individuals must satisfy course work requirements in three areas: (a) basic skills, (b) U.S. Constitution coursework, and (c) subject matter course work requirements in either single or multiple subject areas (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). More recently, research has highlighted the need to embed training on high-leverage instructional practices as a foundationally element of special teacher education programs (McLeskey et al., 2018). In the final step to obtain their preliminary credential, individuals must pass the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). As each state has variations in credentialing requirements, individuals who participated in out-of-state college programs

must meet minimum requirements in the state they seek to teach in (Commission on Credentialing, 2021).

Field placements are an important part of college training programs that are comprised of a supervised experience for the trainee within the school district setting. According to a recent literature review on field experiences, all included school-based placements with students with disabilities generally lasted 10 to 15 weeks in duration and included the frameworks of inclusion, collaboration, professional standards, teacher skills, and student populations (Nagro & deBettencourt, 2017). In these experiences, most teachers in training were able to perform small group intervention, assess students, collect student data, design and implement interventions and support behavioral planning (Nagro & deBettencourt, 2017). During these learning activities, teacher candidates were supervised and created portfolios and videotaped lessons, self-evaluations and reflections, and received feedback on their performance (Nagro & deBettencourt, 2017).

In California, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing issues a two-level special education teaching credential: Preliminary credential, once basic credential requirements are met and the clear credential, once all credential requirements have been fully completed usually through affiliation with a school district's induction program. Furthermore, authorizations allow new special education teachers to conduct educational assessments, provide instruction, and special education support to individuals according to specialization criteria (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). Several examples of authorizations include: Autism spectrum disorders and teaching English learners. Furthermore, specialties are outlined in serving students with:

- Mild/moderate disabilities

- Moderate/severe disabilities

- Deaf and hard of hearing

- Visual impairments

- Physical and health impairments

- Early childhood special education

- Language and academic development

Credential requirements must be renewed every five years.

Professional Development Requirements and Regional Implications for

Special Educators

Federal Implications

Since the 1958 passage of PL 85-926 that enacted the first version of the

Individuals with Educational Disabilities Act, provisions have been put forth to guide

educating students with disabilities (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021).

> Although statewide accountability for education falls within the purview of each
>
> state, federal accountability for all students, including those with an IEP, is
>
> prescribed by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by
>
> Every Student Succeeds Act (commonly referred to as ESSA). However,
>
> additional accountability specifically for students with an IEP is prescribed under
>
> the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and administered by the U.S.
>
> Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
>
> (Doutre et al., 2021, p. 40)

Discretionary federal funding has been generally allocated for preparation and professional development of special educators (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021). Each year, topics change to align with current legislative and practice needs. Professional development requirements are loosely defined and let training programs and local educational areas adapt training to suit their needs (Kleinhammer-Tramill et al., 2010).

State Implications

In California, four different governing bodies influence the CDE's implementation of state and federal programs: (a) The Governor, the (b) California Legislature, the (c) State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the (d) State Board of Education (SBE) (Doutre et al., 2021).

> The Governor proposes the education budget and ultimately approves education bills. The California Legislature is responsible for approving education funding and proposes and votes on education legislation, actions which then must go to the Governor for consideration. The State Superintendent leads the CDE, serves as a spokesperson for state education priorities, and influences education policy by serving on several state education policy boards, including as a non-voting member of the SBE. The SBE is responsible for issuing regulations, serves as the state education agency (SEA) for federal programs, adopts state standards and frameworks, and has the authority to provide waivers to LEAs from some state requirements. (Doutre et al., 2021, p. 40)

The state impact related to professional development emphasis varies as well. Currently, within the CDE, the Special Education Division has placed a legislative

emphasis on dyslexia and early preschool intervention, though advertised CDE professional learning opportunities are limited. The CDE, Special Education Division indicates that staff development programs are identified as one of many areas that regional SELPAs support school districts (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021).

Regional Impact County Offices of Education and Special Education Local Plan Areas

County offices of education are separate and apart from SELPAs, but both act as intermediaries between the state and local school districts. In California, there are 58 county office of educations serving schools (Doutre et al., 2021). As a liaison as they facilitate school districts in "pooling resources for professional development and coordinated supports that otherwise might not be affordable to an individual LEA, especially a small LEA" (Doutre et al., 2021, p. 39).

SELPAs are another intermediary agency supporting school districts (Doutre et al., 2021). "As of SY 2019–20, California had 136 SELPAs — 83 multi- LEA, 47 single-LEA, and five statewide charter SELPAs, plus one unique SELPA serving students in Los Angeles County court schools" (CDE, 2021, p. 39). California's SELPAs focus their support to ensure school districts maintain legal adherence to laws and regulations. "SELPAs were conceived in California's 1974 California Master Plan for Special Education for the purpose of facilitating collaboration among LEAs and COEs that would ensure sufficient economies of scale to adequately provide services for students with an IEP" (Doutre et al., 2021, p. 39). SELPAs receive all federal and state special education funding and disperse it to LEAs based on their member approved allocation plan (Doutre et al., 2021). SELPA's annually maintain a local plan "to ensure a continuum of program

options are available to meet the needs of student with disabilities for special education and related services" (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021).

Within the current annual plan template, professional development is specified annually through a collaborative process, though no training or student outcomes are required or tracked for accountability at this time (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021). Each SELPAs has their own operations committee, which arrange and host various professional development opportunities available to districts within their boundaries and for a cost, members of other SELPAs (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021). These professional development opportunities are typically shared within the regional SELPA level and then are advertised throughout the County Offices of Education. As such, training topics for special educators vary greatly by local and regional practices, as well as with the advent of new case law or professional advancements.

Local Procedures and Practices

Although state and federal law dictate legal obligations, there are many variations in who performs what tasks and when these tasks are to be performed, while district staff are meeting special education requirements. Case management responsibilities vary between and within the school district based on the resources available and organizational norms (Billingsley, 2004). Furthermore, school communities have their own "legacy of traditions and relationships that new special education teachers must learn to negotiate" (Kaufman & Ring, 2011, p. 1). Such steps comprise many paperwork steps with such demands widely regarded as overwhelming in volume by special educators. In fact,

special educators cite the extent of documentation and paperwork as one of the high-ranking reasons for job dissatisfaction and attrition (Billingsley, 2004).

<div align="center">

Post-Employment Training

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Onboarding Process

Most organizations use new-employee orientations - either in person or remotely (Bauer, 2010). Organizations that participate in a formal onboarding process focused on explicitly communicating the company's mission, individual roles, norms, and expected behaviors are more effective than those that do not (Bauer, 2010). Additionally, participating in a thorough onboarding process is predictive of a staff members increased levels of commitment, satisfaction, and retention (Choa et al., 1994; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Vandenberghe et al., 2010). For special educators, the onboarding process must be explicit and provide role clarity (Billingsly, 2004). These findings demonstrate the value of providing meaningful support to staff on the organization's practices and culture when onboarding new special education teachers or any new staff as critical to their success and retention.

Teacher Induction Programs

Teacher induction programs are another source of support and training for new teachers. Recent meta-analysis research has validated the effectiveness of teacher induction programs, finding that those participating in induction programs demonstrate less migration and attrition (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). In California, the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System was created to acknowledge and address the intensive needs of first-year teachers (CA Education Code, 1998). The objective of AB 2171 is "to build on the preparation that precedes initial certification, to transform

academic preparation into practical success in the classroom, [and] to retain greater numbers of capable beginning teachers" (CA Education Code, 1998, p. 1). The law mandates that school districts must develop and implement individualized support, assessment, and feedback of beginning teachers, as necessary for professional certification and based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CA Education Code, 1998). The induction program is differentiated for special educators and requires supervising teachers to be of like credentialing to enhance the personalization of support. This approach is further supported by research indicating increased specialized knowledge, instructional delivery, and instructional practice when mentors are of the same credential and training (Cornelius et al., 2020). During their induction program, the school district liaisons a personalized course of study to address all professional standards aligned to a teacher's special education credential be with students with mild/moderate disabilities, moderate/severe disabilities, Deaf and Hard of Hearing population, etc.

Ongoing Special Education Teacher Training

Finally, at the school district level, professional development offerings vary further and few regulations outline or govern school districts professional development practices (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). California education code EDC 44277: Professional Development, acknowledges the importance of professional growth through a teacher's career and encourages teachers to engage in ongoing professional learning (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021). School districts are encouraged (but not required) to establish professional growth opportunities across a range of topics that support the California standards for the teaching profession. Ongoing training is necessary for all special

educators and is a part of professional teaching standards (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2000),

> [E]ffective professional development programs are dynamic and integrated. They address the organizational, systemic, and cultural supports needed (the context); the way content-specific knowledge, pedagogy, skills, and attitudes are acquired (the process); and the content-specific knowledge, pedagogy, skills, and attitudes needed (the content). Continuous evaluation of student achievement, relative to high academic standards, must be a driving force in shaping professional development plans. The needs of the individual, groups of individuals, school(s), the school district, and the state's educational agency must also be addressed. (p. 2)

Relevant Professional Development Topics for Special Educators

In general, districts vary widely in their instructional, curriculum, and assessment practices and usages and the professional development they provide in these areas. The value of sustained, intensive professional development has been documented (Garet et al., 2001). Additionally, "the duration, collective participation, and core features (i.e., content, active learning, and coherence" (Garet et al., 2001, p. 22) program are also critical elements of a successful educational professional development. Though some districts chose to implement robust training in high leverage instructional and assessment practices, there are no structured training requirements or outcomes that districts require for special educators. Teachers themselves are encouraged through their professional standards to seek resources to further their development in these areas (Brownell, 2020).

High Leverage Instructional Practices

Not all instructional practices are created equal. In recent years, the CEC has worked to identify 22 HLP in the areas of special education (McLeskey et al., 2017). These practices are a foundation of criteria guiding teacher preparation and professional development efforts (McLeskey et al., 2017). The HLP are encompass four related elements of practice—collaboration, assessment, social/emotional/behavioral, and instruction (McLeskey et al., 2017).

Collaboration

Special educators are responsible for communication, planning, and coordinating with a variety of people for their students to benefit from their special education and related services. Along with parents and caregivers, and often times outside community and health providers, special educators also collaborate with school administers, general education teachers, co-teachers, paraeducators, specialists, and even campus supervisors. These communications opportunities are essential in allowing for meaningful adjustment in the implementation and oversight of each student's IEP.

High Leverage Practice 1: Collaborate with Professionals to Increase Student Success

To facilitate student academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral progress special educators must collaborate with general education teachers, support staff, and school leaders on a regular basis. This HLP highlights "sharing ideas, active listening, questioning, planning, problem solving, and negotiating" (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 1). "Through collaboration, effective special education teachers develop and adjust instructional and/or behavioral plans based on student data; they also coordinate

expectations, responsibilities, and resources to maximize student learning" (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 1).

Effective collaboration with other educators and specialists has three key components as defined through the work of the HLPs (McLeskey et al., 2017). The first involves effective communication skills as exhibited through a partnership of active listening, exchanging perspectives and information while demonstrating active engagement. Collaboration is also a relational process that creates a partnership and commitment between educators working towards a common goal. Within the partnership there is a need to establish clear roles and practices around shared decision-making and accountability (McLeskey et al., 2017). Effective collaboration is also intentional using communication to leverage the actions of others towards meeting specific objectives related to student needs. Finally, effective collaboration relies on the proactive use of conflict management strategies to provide direction in cases of disagreement or conflict. When these situations occur, student data can be used to provide clarity and additional support from school leaders is encouraged (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 2: Organize and Facilitate Effective Meetings With Professionals and Families

A key function of a special education teacher is to facilitate and participate in various meetings and to focus on student needs and outcomes (McLeskey et al., 2017). The most common meeting special educators host are IEP meetings that follow legal steps of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) (Code of Federal Regulations, 2022). In these meetings, special educators create a meeting agenda that will guide the participating IEP team member through important consideration and decision-making

phases on a child's IEP development. Key components to organizing and facilitating

effective meetings with professional and families are preparation and the skills of

meeting facilitation (McLeskey et al., 2017). Other, more informal meetings share some

of the same features of preparation and facilitation, but require less coordination and

complexity.

A great deal of preparation is required to lead effective team meetings. Special

educators must carefully align the purpose of the meeting with the coordination of

required team members. Meeting coordination can be complex given the many required

participants and given the length of time that needs to be allocated. Once consensus on a

meeting date and time is arranged, careful attention to notify all participants of meeting

logistics is an important step. Pre-meeting collaboration is also important to ensure the

readiness of school, parent, and community team members (CEC & CEEDAR Center,

2019, HLP 2 Admin Guide). Many meetings require team members to bring student data,

completed evaluation information, and for parents, a list of any parent concerns or

questions to discuss. Establishing goals and allotting time to the various meeting phases

is important to ensure time is allocated to accomplish the purpose of the IEP meeting

(McLeskey et al., 2017). Preparing an agenda in advance will help focus the meeting

towards positive, collaborative outcomes.

Additional skills of meeting facilitation are required that support consensus

building. Special educators should establish clear meeting norms and roles that are

student centered, equalize the access to the information for all participants. The facilitator

should also encourage discussion with participation from all members, including

prompting parent input and participation (McLeskey et al., 2017). Team members should

be transitioned through the steps of the IEP meeting in a manner as to respect individual contributions, but also provide an efficient experience that meets the team meeting objectives. At the conclusion of the meeting, the facilitator should summarize meeting content and identify what follow up action steps are required (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 3: Collaborate With Families to Support Student Learning and Secure Needed Services

Special education teachers collaborate closely with families and guardians to help support student needs and programming (McLeskey et al., 2017). They are responsible for providing case management oversight for the implementation of each child's individualized educational program. They ensure legal responsibilities are met, ensure parents are knowledge of their procedural rights, and act as a liaison through the special education process. Special educators need to advocate for resources to meet the needs of the students they serve (McLeskey et al., 2017, HLP 3 Admin Guide). Two key components for effective collaboration with families are, promoting positive interactions and facilitating good communication (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 3 Admin Guide).

In building and maintaining positive relationships, special educators should consistently demonstrate interactions that are professional, ethical, strength-based, and student centered. They should treat parents and guardians with dignity while honoring their experiences, perspectives, and diversity communication (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 3 Admin Guide). Educators should "demonstrate a high level of knowledge in the area they are working in, continue to learn and grow as professionals, and communicate high expectations for students and families" (CEC & CEEDAR Center,

2019, HLP 3 Admin Guide, p. 1). Teachers should also use collaboration to encourage and channel parent concerns and advocacy in productive ways (McLeskey et al., 2017).

Special educators should use effective practices for communicating with families (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 3 Admin Guide). Effective special education teachers "respectfully and effectively communicate considering the background, socioeconomic status, language, culture, and priorities of the family" (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 7). Communication needs to be made accessible for the family, including the language and format. Language interpretation and translation must be carefully established, planned for, and executed. Additionally, it is important to determine a family's communication preference and establish communication norms around when phone calls are made verse when email, websites, class apps, etc. are used for communication (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 3 Admin Guide).

Assessment

Assessment of student learning and progress is an essential aspect to special education. Special educators use assessment to identify a child's unique strengths, areas of weakness, present levels of performance, establish areas of need to target for instruction, and finally, used to monitor progress of instruction (McLeskey et al., 2017). Special educators are trained to select and use culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment materials (McLeskey et al., 2017). They must also interpret assessment data, communication findings, and generate meaningful recommendations from assessment data (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 4: Use Multiple Sources of Information to Develop a
Comprehensive Understanding of a Student's Strengths and Needs

Special educators must assessable a comprehensive understanding of each
student's unique learning profile and needs in order to maximize their educational
outcomes (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 4 Admin Guide).

> Teachers should collect, aggregate, and interpret data from multiple sources—
> informal and formal observations, work samples, curriculum-based measures,
> functional behavior assessment [FBA], school files, analysis of curriculum,
> information from families, and other data sources). This information is used to
> create an individualized profile of the student's strengths and needs. (McLeskey et
> al., 2017, p. 2)

Attention should also be taken in collecting information regarding the student's interests,
motivations, short- and long-term goals. Important consideration should also be given to
the child's health status, familial situation, language, and cultural experiences (CEC &
CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 4 Admin Guide).

High Leverage Practice 5: Interpret and Communicate Assessment Information
With Stakeholders to Collaboratively Design and Implement Educational Programs

It is the role of the special educator to administer, interpret and
communicate assessment information to stakeholders (student, parent/guardian, and other
providers) as well as involve them in the individualized plan development process
(McLeskey et al., 2017). The use of student assessment data is foundational to the
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) IEP process. Special educators must
amass data in a wide variety of educational performance areas. Each assessment battery

must be selected to be culturally and linguistically appropriate for the student being assessed. Additionally, special educators need to interpret assessment performance while considering the student's unique cultural and linguistic experiences. Once data is collected, it must be synthesized in a comprehensive manner into the required components of an IEP. Parents and other team members should be provided time to review drafts of these documents in advance of the meeting to enhance their ability to meaningfully participate in the IEP meeting (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 5 Admin Guide). Finally, the IEP document should read and be reviewed in a manner as to be accessible to IEP team stakeholders (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 6: Use Student Assessment Data, Analyze Instructional Practices, and Make Necessary Adjustments that Improve Student Outcomes

Once student assessment information is complied, special educators develop rigorous, though reasonably achievable long-term individualized learning goals (Code of Federal Regulations, 2022). Based on the goals, special educators provide instruction that supports the achievement of these goals (McLeskey et al., 2017). The instructional process is dynamic in nature, such that a student's performance towards the goal is carefully monitored and instructional adjustments are made to ensure sufficient progress towards the goal is made. Goal assessments can be observational using work sample, and informal in nature, but they must measure data specific to the goal needing progress monitored (McLeskey et al., 2017). Special educators should "retain, reuse, and extend practices that improve student learning and adjust or discard those that do not" (McLeskey et al., 2017).

Social/Emotional/Behavior

      The use of effective social, emotional, and behavioral strategies is a critical component in creating a predictable, thriving learning environment that supports student achievement and well-being (McLeskey et al., 2017). Special educators who implement a positive, respectful, and relational approach to support their students increase engagement and outcomes. This also includes incorporating practices that create an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 7: Establish a Consistent, Organized, and Respectful Learning Environment

      To build a positive classroom culture, special educators should create and consistently implement a highly structured learning environment that clearly outline success criteria for student, classroom, and school wide expectations (McLeskey et al., 2017). These rules, procedures, and norms should be written as to be developmentally appropriate, respectful, and culturally responsive (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 7 Admin Guide). Creating a predictable learning environment supports a positive class and school climate where children are explicitly taught and practice the expected student behaviors that support positive student outcomes (McLeskey et al., 2017). Teachers should provide reinforcement and positive feedback to increase the likelihood of students are meeting expectations. Using these type of proactive classroom systems and procedures will reduce the potential for unproductive student behaviors and increase the presences of student engagement (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 8: Provide Positive and Constructive Feedback to Guide

Students' Learning and Behavior

Special educators should reinforce learning and student progress by providing strategic, positive feedback to continue forward momentum towards learning targets (McLeskey et al., 2017). Feedback should be personalized, and promote the independence of each learner. It is also important to consider how a student's unique social, environmental, and cultural dynamics may affect how they receive feedback (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 8 Admin Guide). "Feedback may be verbal, nonverbal, or written, and should be timely, contingent, genuine, meaningful, age appropriate, and at rates commensurate with the task and phase of learning (i.e., acquisition, fluency, maintenance)" (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 3).

High Leverage Practice 9: Teach Social Behaviors

Special educators are also responsible for monitoring and teaching social behaviors that support learning and engagement in school (McLeskey et al., 2017). Social skills instruction is also a data driven process drawing from a variety of sources (classroom data, office referrals, observations, and reports of students, teachers, and parents) (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 9 Admin Guide). Like academic skills, social skills should be explicitly taught in the areas of interpersonal skills, communication, turn taking, problem solving, self-management, conflict resolution, and play (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 9 Admin Guide). Lessons should align with class and school wide expectations (McLeskey et al., 2017). Similar to academic instruction, direct social skills instruction follow a similar framework of teach, model, and practice (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 9 Admin Guide). Social skills

instruction should be systematically planned for, provided, progress monitored, and adjusted according to student progress (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 10: Conduct Functional Behavioral Assessments to Develop Individual Student Behavior Support Plans

When students have behaviors that are impeding their learning, special educators should gather data to inform a proactive behavioral plan focused on decreasing maladaptive behaviors and increasing prosocial behaviors.

> A comprehensive FBA [functional behavioral assessment] results in a hypothesis about the function of the student's problem behavior. Once the function is determined, a behavior intervention plan is developed that teaches the student a pro-social replacement behavior that will serve the same or similar function; alters the environment to make the replacement behavior more efficient and effective than the problem behavior; alters the environment to no longer allow the problem behavior to access the previous outcome; and includes ongoing data collection to monitor progress. (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 7)

Instruction

Special educators must be strategic, reflective, and adaptive in providing a rigorous educational experience for student with disabilities (McLeskey et al., 2017). They must have a wide range of expertise, including knowledge of teaching and learning, instructional planning and grade level standards, skill in implementing accommodations and modifications, and many tools for instructional delivery, differentiation, and student engagement (McLeskey et al., 2017). Special educators continue to refine their

knowledge through consultation and collaboration with peers and other educators as well as subscribe to the value of ongoing professional development.

High Leverage Practice 11: Identify and Prioritize Long- and Short-Term Learning Goals

Special educators draw from a variety of student assessment findings to generate short- and long-term learning goals (McLeskey et al., 2017). Goals should be constructed in objective, measurable, and reasonably achievable milestones or benchmarks (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 11 Admin Guide). Goals should also be strategically linked to general education grade level essential standards and support meaningful access to general education curriculum (McLeskey et al., 2017). Some goal areas do not tie directly to a grade level standard, but are considered an area of need for improved educational outcomes. Additional considerations are the student's interests and prior patterns of learning (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 12: Systematically Design Instruction Toward a Specific Learning Goal

Effective special educators are intentional in planning and delivering sequential instruction that builds student knowledge towards their learning goals (McLeskey et al., 2017). Teachers use clear, rigorous, observable, and measurable criteria for a learning target (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 12 Admin Guide). Through a process of task analysis, teachers learn and understand the role of each skill within a task and how the skills combine towards mastery of a standard (McLeskey et al., 2017). They know how to assess for missing skills and learn intervention strategies to teach a skill when mastery is not yet achieved (McLeskey et al., 2017). Finally, they make adjustments

throughout instruction to ensure a prescriptive approach to individual student needs

(McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 13: Adapt Curriculum Tasks and Materials for Specific Learning Goals

Special educators are knowledgeable of curriculum, differentiate instruction, and make adaptions to ensure individual student needs are meet (McLeskey et al., 2017). "Teachers select materials and tasks based on student needs; use relevant technology; and make modifications by highlighting relevant information, changing task directions, and decreasing the amount of material" (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 6). Teachers create visual representations, provide graphic organizers, and teach guided note taking and mnemonic strategies to promote accessibly to challenging curriculum (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 13 Admin Guide).

High Leverage Practice 14: Teach Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies to Support Learning and Independence

Special educators empower their students by teaching them cognitive and metacognitive strategies that improve student learning (McLeskey et al., 2017). Memory, attention, and self-regulation are cognitive skills that can be leveraged to better understand how problems can best be solved, attention maintained, and to build awareness to one's thinking and reasoning process (McLeskey et al., 2017). Teaching these skills can help students exert independence in monitoring their own learning and goals (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 15: Provide Scaffolded Supports

Scaffolding is an instructional method that involves gradually reducing an

educator's assistance as the students understanding increases (Center for Instructional

Innovation, 2022). "Scaffolded supports provide temporary assistance for students so that

they can successfully complete tasks that they cannot yet do independently and with a

high rate of success" (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 12). It is important that only the

minimum necessary amount of scaffolded support is used and then gradually faded to

increase the learner's independence (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 15 Admin

Guide). Scaffolds can be applied to a wide range of content areas, including: (a)

academics, (b) behavior, (c) communication, and (d) social skills (CEC & CEEDAR

Center, 2019, HLP 15 Admin Guide). Scaffolds can take the form of visual, written, and

verbal supports (e.g., writing checklists, visual timer, verbal reminders) (CEC &

CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 15 Admin Guide). They should be planned for intentionally

based on the demands of the lesson and tailored and then adjusted to meet the

individualize needs of each student (McLeskey et al., 2017).

High Leverage Practice 16: Use Explicit Instruction

Special educators need to provide instruction that is clear, sequential, contextual,

and precise for students with disabilities (McLeskey et al., 2017). Explicit instruction

should also incorporate a multi-sensory approach and structural learning so as to increase

generalization during independent practice (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP Admin

Guide). Explicit instruction includes a lesson design that uses funneling for skill

development, starting with general concepts and then moving to more finite instructional

components (McLeskey et al., 2017). Strategies such as guided practice, task analysis of

steps, scaffolding, and review of examples and non-examples, all help the learner make meaning of new concepts (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 16 Admin Guide). Finally, close monitoring and feedback are essential final components to assess and adjust for student learning (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 16 Admin Guide).

High Leverage Practice 17: Use Flexible Grouping

Special educators assign and reevaluate flexible groupings of homogeneous and heterogeneous groups to maximize student learning (McLeskey et al., 2017). Strategic groupings allow for a targeted approach to small group instruction and increases equitable practice opportunities (McLeskey et al., 2017). These groups are also adjusted to create effective, meaningful, and supportive peer groupings where working collaboratively can be practiced and learned (McLeskey et al., 2017). Cooperative learning structures are employed to maintain engagement and build upon group learning dynamics

High Leverage Practice 18: Use Strategies to Promote Active Student Engagement

Special educators must draw from a range of strategies to effectively engage and maintain students in learning (McLeskey et al., 2017).

> They promote engagement by connecting learning to students' lives (e.g., knowing students' academic and cultural backgrounds) and using a variety of teacher-led (e.g., choral responding and response cards), peer-assisted (e.g., cooperative learning and peer tutoring), student-regulated (e.g., self-management), and technology-supported strategies that research has shown result in increased student engagement. (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 19)

Student feedback and encouragement is a critical component when implementing

strategies for engagement (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP18 Admin Guide).

High Leverage Practice 19: Use Assistive and Instructional Technologies

Special educators select, implement, and evaluate assistive and instructional

technology to support and enhance learning of their students (McLeskey et al., 2017).

Assistive and instructional technology is now more common place for all students within

the educational setting, through for students with disabilities, the IEP requires a

personalized plan to access their curriculum and to ensure IEP goals are mastered (Code

of Federal Regulations, 2022). The needs for assistive technology are unique to each

student and vary across content areas, settings, instructional design, and curricular levels

(McLeskey et al., 2017). Technology should be selected to maintain the maximum

amount of independence while accessing a lesson's content and delivery (McLeskey et

al., 2017). Assistive technology must continuously be monitored and adjusted for

maximum appropriateness to the learner (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 19 Admin

Guide).

High Leverage Practice 20: Provide Intensive Instruction

Effective special education teachers must be able to expertly pair the intensity of

their instruction to the intensity of the student's need (McLeskey et al., 2017). Generally

speaking, student's with greater needs require more intensity of instruction and services

than students who demonstrate more typical learning acquisition. Students should be

provided the 'just right' balance of intellectual rigor and guided supports with such

concepts inherent to the research on the benefits of a learner's productive struggle

(Murdoch et al., 2020).

Increased intensity can be accomplished by applying resources (time, staff, instruction, etc.) in a more concentrated manner and/or with greater frequency. Practically, academic assessment is used to form instructional groupings where by students are provided "systematic, explicit, and well-paced instruction" (McLeskey et al., 2017, p. 25) towards a learning outcome. Student progress should be carefully monitored and their instruction adjusted accordingly with tight cycles of instruction, practice, and feedback (McLeskey et al., 2017). Where possible, research-based instruction and intervention materials and mythologies should be used (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 20 Admin Guide). Finally, decision rules are used to assess a student's response to instruction and need for further instructional approaches or movement onto the next learning concept (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 20 Admin Guide).

High Leverage Practice 21: Teach Students to Maintain and Generalize new Learning Across Time and Settings

A critical role of the special educator is to teach students to maintain and generalize newly learned content and skills in a variety of different settings and situations (McLeskey et al., 2017). Primary instruction should incorporate many methods of un understanding as to appeal a comprehensive learning experience. To promote generalization of skills/behaviors, teachers should construct reinforcement schedules to ensure that the desired behavior persists across settings (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 21 Admin Guide). As student's increase in their task competency, reinforcement should then be sufficiently faded from the task. Teachers should also ensure high levels of overlearning trials and reoccurring practice to solidify learning (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 21 Admin Guide). Finally, teaching student's self- management skills,

such as goal setting and self-reinforcement, are a critical part to developmentally scaffolding their learning and behaviors over time (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 21 Admin Guide).

High Leverage Practice 22: Provide Positive and Constructive Feedback to Guide Students' Learning and Behavior

Effective teacher feedback, when positive and constructive, promotes engagement and increases student learning and behavior outcomes (McLeskey et al., 2017). Feedback, whether it be verbal, written, or nonverbal should be specific as to how guiding a student's effort towards a measurable outcome (McLeskey et al., 2017). For example, feedback should identify where the student is currently, their learning target, and what actions are required to meet the learning target (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 22 Admin Guide). Providing exemplars or rubrics is additional methods to illustrate the desired outcome for a work product (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 22 Admin Guide).

Feedback needs to be well timed, developmentally appropriate, and be made meaningful for the student given their unique personal history. Feedback should occur proactively or at a juncture of struggle as to guide a student through a completed task or process. Feedback can also be given regarding self-regulation tasks to help the student gain perspective and guide their future decisions. Feedback structures, such as self-check lists and rubrics are ways to increase a student's independent monitoring their own effectiveness (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019, HLP 22 Admin Guide).

Theoretical Foundation for Retention

An important theoretical foundation for this study is the establishment that retaining teachers is more economical than hiring new staff (Hornick-Lockard, 2014). Research has also established a conceptual framework of teacher turnover and has identified nine categories of personal correlates, school correlates, and external contributing factors (Nguyen & Springer, 2021). Understanding these variables of retention provides a foundation from which to transcend from the current special education teacher shortage (Ondrasek et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework of High Leverage Practices

The CEC has identified 22 HLP in the areas of special education (McLeskey et al., 2017). These practices are a foundation of criteria guiding teacher preparation and professional development efforts (McLeskey et al., 2017). The HLP encompass four related elements of practice, including: (a) collaboration, (b) assessment, (c) social/emotional/behavioral, and (d) instruction (McLeskey et al., 2017).

Summary

School districts need to prioritize strategic and systematic professional development to support the complex needs of special educators. School districts vary widely with their offerings of special education professional development and few regulations outline or govern ongoing professional development. The compilation of HLP in special education provides a comprehensive, research based professional development structure (McLeskey et al., 2017). A gap in the research exists in identifying which school district professional development practices reinforce special education teacher's effectiveness and retention. Furthermore, the current study seeks to identify which

targeted, high leverage professional development topics positively support a special

educator's experience and ultimately their retention in the field.

Synthesis Matrix

A synthesis matrix (see Appendix A) was utilized by this researcher to assemble

and organize the pertinent variables for the literature review. A synthesis matrix

organizes articles in line with the research variables and related authors. Additionally, the

matrix functions as a visual representation for quick review of the current studies

structures and the foundation of prior bodies of research.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

There has been a call to action to reframe professional development for special educators that better secures their readiness, satisfaction, and retention (McLeskey et al., 2017). It has been well established that retaining teachers is less costly than hiring, and sufficiently supporting new teachers will help retain them (Hornick-Lockard, 2014). Districts themselves can ease their problems by focusing their efforts on preventative measures such as ongoing professional development (Butler, 2008). School districts vary widely with their offerings of special education professional development and few regulations outline or govern ongoing professional development (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). Additionally, professional development for special educators can take many forms, and can vary year to year based on different funding models and resources. Professional development can also be impacted unpredictably by new legal findings, procedural requirements, and changing initiatives throughout the school year.

This chapter will re-state the purpose of the study and the research question. The research design will be explained, as well as identifying the population, sampling frame, and sample. The instrumentation of the study will be specified followed by the data collection and data analysis procedures and, finally, limitations of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate the importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs

and to determine how the ratings of the different groups compare to one another. A second purpose was to describe the impact these professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center have on experienced special education teachers' in the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school, and adult transition grade level ranges decision to remain in the profession and how the descriptions of the different groups compare to one another.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed within the current research study:

1. How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate the importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs?

2. How do the ratings for special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?

3. How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges describe the impact of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center on their decision to remain in the profession?

4. How do the descriptions for the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?

Research Methods

The current study is a mixed-method descriptive comparative design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative survey methodology (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A quantitative approach was be used to rate experienced special educator's professional development perception of different professional development topics and how their experience with these topics impact their retention in the field of special education. Data was gathered regarding the various professional development topics and delivery methods experienced by the teachers.

Quantitative Research Design

A quantitative approach was used to generate objective ratings, which can be reduced for numerical analysis (Patton, 2015). The researcher created and field tested a survey to gather data on special educator's professional development experiences and their retention in the field of special education. Data was gathered regarding the various professional development topics and delivery methods experienced by the participant. Questions were presented in a fixed choice format and provided for a wide range of possible experiences.

Qualitative Research Design

In considering complementary qualitative research methodology, a phenomenological methodology was used to understand the personal stories of special education staff to unveil the complexity of their roles. Patton (2015) suggests this approach when seeking to understand the "meaning, structure, and essence of the lived

experience of this phenomenon" (p. 98) for a group of people. In this case, special

education teachers were asked if the professional development they have received has

influenced their retention. It was decided that such information would best align to the

research questions and provide a sufficient contribution to this research area.

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) referred to a population as the "total group to

which results can be generalized" (p. 129). Participants in this study were teachers,

particularly special education teachers. According to an April 2021 report by the

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, in the 2019-2020 school year, there

were 306, 261 teachers in the state of California and 17, 979 new teaching credentials

issued. In the 2019-2020 school year, approximately 7.3 million 3 to 21-year students or

14% of students in California schools were identified as receiving special education

services (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Therefore, the population for this study

was the approximately 30, 626 special education teachers in California in the 2020-2021

school year based upon percentage of special education students.

Sampling Frame

According to Taherdoost (2016), "a sampling frame is a list of the actual cases

from which the sample will be drawn" (p. 20). The sampling frame for a research study is

the collective group for which the study's data and findings can be generalized. A

sampling frame has been outlined to identify specific sources to comprise a subset of

cases or individuals from a larger population (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2022). The

sampling frame for this study included all special education teachers in San Diego

County, California currently employed in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside

Union Elementary District. In the five districts selected, there were 300 special educators employed at the time of this study.

Sample

A sample is defined as a representative set from the total population (Patton, 2015). The sample subjects of this study were a subset of the sampling frame who completed all survey requirements with fidelity. Seventy-five special education teachers in the profession more than years were included.

Quantitative Sampling Procedures

Inclusion criteria were those teachers who consented to participation and completed all survey requirements with fidelity.

The quantitative sample subjects of this study were all special education teachers in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union School District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District who met the following criteria:

- Fully credentialed special education teacher

- Three or more years in the field

- Currently employed in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District

- The quantitative sample included 300 teachers from all participating districts

Quantitative Sample Selection Process

The sample selection process was as follows:

1. Researcher contacted districts to receive permission to solicit participation from special education teachers in those districts.

2. Researcher sent a request for participation to all special education teachers in all participating districts: Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District (see Appendix B)

3. Those teachers who agreed to participate were sent a description of the study, Informed Consent documents, and the Participants' Bill of Rights (see Appendix C-F).

4. Surveys for the quantitative portion of the study were sent via email to all participants (see Appendix G).

Qualitative Sampling Procedures

Inclusion criteria were those teachers who consented to participation and completed all quantitative survey requirements with fidelity. The qualitative sample subjects of this study were all special education teachers in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District who met the following criteria:

- Fully credentialed special education teacher

- Three or more years in the field

- Currently employed in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District

- Volunteered to participate in a follow up interview

- The qualitative sample included 10 teachers, at least one from each district

Qualitative Sample Selection Process

The qualitative sample was selected as follows:

1. Quantitative surveys had a response asking if the participant was willing to participate in a follow-up interview

2. From those participants who volunteered for the interview, three were selected from each of the districts at random for a total of 10 participants for the interviews

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this study was a survey seeking to address both quantitative and qualitative findings. The survey was administered in the same manner for all five-participating districts. All participants were provided information addressing the requirements of informed consent, including explanation of research participation, possible usage of personal information, data storage, any possible harmful effects, and finally, options for removal from the study.

Quantitative Instrument

The instrument used for the quantitative portion of this study was a survey adapted directly from each of the 22 HLP items. The survey requested information on teaching status (intern, year 1 or 2 teacher, or 3 or more years teaching) and current

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teaching grade level (preschool, elementary, middle school, high school, or adult

transition). Additionally, the survey included simple and clear directions for completion,

which also enhanced the instrument's validity and reliability (McMillan & Schumacher,

2010). The survey was administered digitally via a Google Form survey and consisted of

22 questions adapted from 22 HLP (McLeskey et al., 2017). A closed format using

interval data according to a 4-point Likert scale was consist across questions ranging

from 1- *Not at all Important* to 4- *Extremely Important*.

Field Test/Expert Panel

The research survey questions were field tested to establish validity and

reliability. The research survey was presented to two participating district administrative

designees for feedback. The criteria for the expert panel member was to have 3 to 5

years' experience as a special education director and to have also completed doctoral

level training. Additionally, the researcher will review the survey with two special

education teachers willing to provide field testing participation consent. The survey

questions were be field tested with an informed and experienced test group of voluntary

participants, composed of special educators during the spring/summer of 2022. Final

adjustments to the survey process was incorporated into the research instruments to

support a high level of test validity and reliability.

Quantitative Validity

Proper attention to survey validity is essential to ensure appropriate inferences are

made (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Written survey questions were developed to

align closely with the clearly stated description of the constructs being assessed.

Additionally, all questions were based on an individual's perception of their learning and effectiveness.

Quantitative Reliability

A survey's reliability relates to the consistency in which the survey arrives at the same findings across administration (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher administered the survey within the same structured digitized format to all participants. The same explicit directions were provided to each participant and all questions were presented in the same order. The surveys were scored using the same criteria and respondents were not limited to a timed completion in any administrations. Sources of measurement error were considered and mitigated to the maximum extent possible.

Qualitative Instrumentation

A follow up structured interview was completed to gather additional information on the experiences of special educators in the area of professional development. The qualitative instrument addressed Research Question 3: *How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, or adult transition grade level ranges describe the impact of professional development topics identified as HLP in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center on their decision to remain in the profession?* The questions for the structured interview were adapted from the HLP for students with disabilities resources for school leaders (McLeskey et al., 2017). Each of the 22 HLP outline key elements for school leaders to embed in teacher feedback cycles and professional development (McLeskey et al., 2017). HLP were chosen for analysis based on their connection to factors which impact teacher stress and influence teacher retention in the field of special education (Boyer & Gillespie,

2000; Freedberg & Harrington, 2017). Each of the 22 HLP were to be rated in their value of importance. The same questions and format were used with each individual interviewed, though the responses were unique to each participant. The responses were recorded, coded, and analyzed for trends.

Field Test/Expert Pane

The research interview questions were field tested to establish validity and reliability. The research interview questions were presented to two participating district administrative designees for feedback. The criteria for the expert panel member was to have 3 to 5 years' experience as a special education director and to have also completed doctoral level training. Additionally, the interview protocol was field tested with an informed and experienced test group of voluntary participants, composed of special educators during the spring/summer of 2022. The researcher recorded the structured interviews using the Zoom platform. For the field test, feedback was sought on the interview methods, question wording and length, as well as the recording process itself. Final adjustments to the structured interview process was incorporated into the research instruments to support a high level of test validity and reliability.

Qualitative Validity

Validity ensures that the study "measures or tests what is actually intended" (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). Validity also assures that the findings from the instruments are true (Roberts, 2010) and aligned directly to the research questions (Patton, 2015). An Interview Question Development Matrix was used to assure the alignment of interview questions to the research question (see Appendix H). Final adjustments to the structured

interview process was incorporated into the research instruments to support a high level of test validity.

Qualitative Reliability

The researcher conducted field tests of the research interview questions to ensure the survey assesses reliability across administrations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The field test was conducted using the same structured interview process to ensure reliability across all 10 interviews. Responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded to assess for accuracy of the alignment between interview questions, responses, and research questions. Final adjustments to the structured interview process was incorporated into the research instruments to support a high level of test reliability.

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Data Collection

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Prior to data collection, the researcher submitted and obtained approval from the University of Massachusetts Global Institutional Review Board (see Appendix I) and complete the necessary coursework for National Institute of Health Clearance (see Appendix J). Informed consent was also sought from each participating school district and study participant. Each participant was also provided assurances regarding the confidential storage of their personal information. Data collection was conducted under the supervision of the examiner, district administrative designees, as well as the author's dissertation chair. The following steps were taken during the data collection process:

1. Secured school districts for participation: Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District

2. Secured participants for the study who are third year special education teachers or higher

3. Administered survey assessment to school district participants via an emailed electronic survey. The email also included information about the researcher, an overview of the study, informed consent and confidentiality information, as well as instructions for survey completion

4. Select a sub-sampling of survey participants to participate in an expanded interview, approximately 10 participants, at least one from each district.

5. Compiled and coded the results of all data from both participant groups (survey and interview)

6. Used the appropriate statistical test to determine any statistically significant trends

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey data was collected, and analyzed by grade level of special educators. Results were tabulated from all participating districts and described through statistical analysis. Survey participants were analyzed by grade level (preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, or adult transition).

Qualitative Data Analysis

An inductive analysis process utilized surveys and follow-up interviews to thoroughly explore the research questions. Additionally, a structured means of data collection was utilized to reduce bias. Data collection was paired with a rigorous coding process to maximize a complex interpretation of findings (Patton, 2015, pp. 471-474).

Interview survey data was reviewed, hand coded, then computer coded to mitigate errors, and organized into themes. Frequency counts for data was then reviewed. Narrative data gleaned from the qualitative process was then used to draw conclusions about the needs and experience of special education teachers.

Inter-Rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability provides "a way of quantifying the degree of agreement between two or more coders who make independent ratings about the features of a set of subjects" (Hallgren, 2012, p. 1). It is widely recognized that at least 10% of interview data should be double coded (Lombard et al., 2002). To address reliability, 10% of the data set was double-coded for themes and frequency counts by a second trained researcher. The standard of 90% coding agreement was sought, though 80% agreement was also deemed acceptable and was used to stablish a minimum acceptable range for the current study (Lombard et al. 2002).

Limitations

Limitations are elements of the research design that impact the interpretation of findings (Roberts, 2010). Researchers need to intentionally design their study to minimize such bias and be explicit regarding the limitations of their study (Patton, 2015). The following areas were considered possible limitations and the following steps were taken to limit bias:

1. The study utilized convenience sampling with the researchers affiliated place of employment which may have yielded more or less participation than a randomly selected school district with no ties to the researcher. To limit bias,

participation was voluntary and questions were presented in a manner as to not have a preferred response.

2. The study used convenience sampling to secure the participation of four collaborating districts in the county. The willingness of other special education directors to participate in such a study may have demonstrated unique attributes within their staff and professional development trends.

3. Related to sampling, all participating districts were public school districts and their affiliated charter schools. The study did not include single SELPA district, charters, or private school teachers. Results need to be interpreted with caution as they may not represent the attitudes or beliefs of single SELPA districts or charters as well as private school teachers that elect to employee special education teachers.

4. As a mixed method study, both quantitative and qualitive methodologies utilize self-report techniques either through survey or interview. Respondents may not provide truthful responses or may provide responses that they would believe the researcher (a special education director) would want to hear. To reduce the potential effect of this limitation, impression management was mitigated to include the following disclaimer: "There are no right or wrong answers to the below questions. Different people will find certain topics more important than others in helping them to maintain longer in the profession."

Summary

Districts must address the special educator retention crisis with a sense of urgency and focus on preventative measures to recruit and retain special educators (Butler, 2008).

In heeding this well documented call to action, school districts need to prioritize strategic and systematic planning to address the targeted professional development needs of their special educators. School districts vary widely with their offerings of special education professional development and few regulations outline or govern ongoing professional development. A gap in the research exists in identifying which school district professional development practices and topics leverage special education teacher's effectiveness. Furthermore, little is known as to which targeted, high leverage professional development topics and methods positively support a special educator's onboarding experience and effectiveness and, ultimately, their retention in the field.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Chapter IV reviews the study's purpose statement, research questions, population, sample, and methodology. This chapter will review the quantitative data and qualitative data collected to address Research Questions 1 through 4. Quantitative survey findings address Research Questions 1 and 2, whereas the qualitative data collected via interviews address Research Questions 3 and 4.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate the importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs, and to determine how the ratings of the different groups compare to one another. A second purpose was to describe the impact these professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center have on experienced special education teachers' in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition grade level ranges decision to remain in the profession and how the descriptions of the different groups compare to one another.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed within the current research study:

1. How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate the

importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs?

2. How do the ratings for special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?

3. How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges describe the impact of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center on their decision to remain in the profession?

4. How do the descriptions for the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The current study is a mixed-method descriptive comparative design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative survey methodology (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A quantitative approach was used to rate experienced special educator's professional development perception of different professional development topics and how their experience with these topics impact their retention in the field of special education. Data was gathered regarding the various professional development topics and delivery methods experienced by the teachers.

Quantitative Research Design

A quantitative approach was used to generate objective ratings, which can be reduced for numerical analysis (Patton, 2015). The researcher created and field tested a survey to gather data on special educator's professional development experiences and their retention in the field of special education. Data was gathered regarding the various professional development topics and delivery methods experienced by the participants. Questions were presented in a fixed choice format and provided for a wide range of possible experiences.

Qualitative Research Design

In considering complementary qualitative research methodology, the researcher utilized a phenomenological methodology seeking to understand the personal stories of special education staff to unveil the complexity of their roles. Patton (2015) suggests this approach when seeking to understand the "meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon" (p. 98) for a group of people. In this case, special education teachers were asked if the professional development they have received has influenced their retention. Such information was aligned to the research questions and provided a sufficient contribution to this research area.

Population

The population for this research study was teachers, particularly special education teachers. According to an April 2021 report by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, in the 2019-2020 school year, there were 306, 261 teachers in the state of California and 17, 979 new teaching credentials issued. In the 2019-2020 school year, approximately 7.3 million 3 to 21-year students or 14% of students in California schools

were identified as receiving special education services (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Therefore, the population for this study was the approximately 30, 626 special education teachers in California in the 2020 to 2021 school year based upon percentage of special education students.

Sample

The sampling frame for this study includes all special education teachers in San Diego County, California currently employed in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District. In the five districts selected, there were 300 special educators employed at the time of this study. The sample subjects of this study were a subset of the sampling frame who completed all survey requirements with fidelity. Twenty-six special education teachers in the profession more than three years were included.

Demographic Data

This mixed methods study included 26 eligible participants for the quantitative portion and 10 for the qualitative portion.

Quantitative Sample Selection Process

For the quantitative portion of the study, participants provided demographic data affirming that the quantitative sample subjects of this study were all special education teachers who met the following criteria:

- Fully credentialed special education teacher

- Three or more years in the field

- Currently employed in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District

- The quantitative sample included potentially 300 special educators from all participating districts

Quantitative Participation Process

For the quantitative portion of the study, the following process was followed:

- Those teachers who agreed to participate were sent a description of the study, Informed Consent documents, and the Participants' Bill of Rights

- Surveys for the quantitative portion of the study were sent via email to all participants (see Appendix K)

Table 1 provides information on the study demographics for the quantitative sample.

Table 1

Study Demographics for Quantitative Sample Participants by District and Grade Level

District	Preschool	Elementary	Middle School	High School	Transition
District A	3	10	5	0	0
District B	1	5	1	0	0
District C	1	1	0	1	0
District D	0	0	0	6	0
District E	0	0	0	2	0

Qualitative Sample Selection Process

Among the qualitative data, 28 participants indicated their willingness to participate in a follow up interview. Inclusion criteria included those teachers who consented to participation and completed all quantitative survey requirements with

fidelity. The qualitative sample subjects of this study were all special education teachers who met the following criteria:

- Fully credentialed special education teacher

- Three or more years in the field

- Currently employed in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, Tulare Joint Union High School District.

- Volunteered to participate in a follow up interview

- The qualitative sample sought to included 10 teachers, at least one from each district

Qualitative Participation Process

The qualitative sample were selected as follows:

- Quantitative surveys has a response asking if the participant is willing to participate in a follow-up interview

- From those participants who volunteered for the interview, the researcher selected two from each of the selected district at random

- The researcher emailed willing participants to coordinate an interview time

- Of those who responded, an interview time was confirmed and an interview held

Of the 28 possible participants who were contacted, only 10 responded, confirmed, and attended a follow up interview. Ideally, two participants from each district were to be selected, though based on interest and availability, five participants were from District A, three participants from District B, and one from each of the three remaining Districts C –

E were chosen to participate. Table 2 depicts the study demographics of the qualitative sample.

Table 2

Study Demographics for Qualitative Sample by District and Grade Level

Sample	District	School Level
Participant 1	District A	Elementary
Participant 2	District B	Elementary
Participant 3	District A	Middle School
Participant 4	District C	High School
Participant 5	District A	Preschool
Participant 6	District B	Elementary
Participant 7	District B	Elementary
Participant 8	District D	High School
Participant 9	District E	High School
Participant 10	District A	Elementary

Note. All interviewed participants are special educators with three or more years of experience.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Data triangulation was applied to understand research findings. The findings in this study were a result of quantitative survey data analysis from 36 participants across four grade bands of education. There was also qualitative data including five hours of interviews with 10 special educators across four grade bands (preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school). Ten percent of the data were double coded by a fellow researcher to ensure inter-coder reliability. After analyzing the data, themes were reported for Research Questions 1 through 4. The following sections report the data based on research question.

Findings for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked: *How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level*

ranges rate the importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage

practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center

at helping them perform their teaching jobs?

The research survey used was generated by the research and is adapted from the

CEC and CEEDAR Center's (2017) work on HLPs. A total of 43 participants responded

to the survey that was distributed from their district leadership. Participants were asked

about their professional development experiences with HLP in special education with the

following instructions: "For the below twenty-two questions, please rate the importance

of the HLP professional development topics that have helped you remain in the special

education field. There are no right or wrong answers to the below questions. Different

people will find certain topics more important than others in helping them to maintain

longer in the profession."

Of the total 43 survey participants, 84.1% of survey respondents reported three

years or more experience as a special educator and were included in the data analysis.

The remaining 9.1% (four intern level special education participants) and 6.3% (three

year Level 1 or 2 special educator participants) survey results were excluded from data

analysis. These seven participants were excluded from analysis due to their status as

intern or year 1 or 2 teachers with a limited experience of teacher retention. From the five

participating district, no participants reported affiliation with a post high school transition

program.

Survey participants responded to 22 questions using a five-point Likert-type scale.

Possible response ranged from 1-*Not at all Important* to 4- *Extremely Important*. A

response was required for each item as required within the electronic survey format. All

items are added up for a total scale score ranging from 22 to 88. Average responses

ranged from a rating of 2.91 to 4.00. The higher the Likert score, the more the individual

believed that HLP professional development that helped them remain in the special

education teaching profession.

      To address Research Question 1, mean total survey scores for each participant

were calculated and coded by district of participation and grade level. Table 3 reports the

individual participants average ratings on the impact of HLP development on their

retention in the field. All ratings were rated in the 3-*Important* to 4-*Extremely Important*

range. No participants had an overall average rating of 1-*Not at all Important* or 2-

Minimally Important.

Table 3

Participant Overall Ranking of High Leverage Practices as related to their Impact on Retention by District and Grade Level

Participant	District Participation	Grade Level	Mean Score
Special Educator 1	District A	Elementary	3.95
Special Educator 2	District A	Elementary	2.91
Special Educator 3	District A	Elementary	3.77
Special Educator 4	District A	Elementary	3.82
Special Educator 5	District A	Elementary	4.00
Special Educator 6	District A	Preschool	3.91
Special Educator 7	District A	Elementary	3.95
Special Educator 8	District A	Middle School	3.68
Special Educator 9	District A	Middle School	4.00
Special Educator 10	District A	Elementary	3.68
Special Educator 11	District A	Middle School	3.18
Special Educator 12	District A	Preschool	3.95
Special Educator 13	District A	Middle School	2.09
Special Educator 14	District A	Elementary	3.95
Special Educator 15	District A	Elementary	3.95
Special Educator 16	District A	Preschool	3.18
Special Educator 17	District A	Middle School	3.86
Special Educator 18	District A	Elementary	3.27
Special Educator 19	District B	Preschool-aged	4.00

Participant	District Participation	Grade Level	Mean Score
Special Educator 20	District B	Elementary	3.64
Special Educator 21	District B	Middle School	3.41
Special Educator 22	District B	Elementary	3.64
Special Educator 23	District B	Elementary	3.36
Special Educator 24	District B	Elementary	3.50
Special Educator 25	District B	Elementary	3.55
Special Educator 26	District C	High School	3.09
Special Educator 27	District C	Elementary	3.36
Special Educator 28	District C	Preschool	3.00
Special Educator 29	District D	High School	3.73
Special Educator 30	District D	High School	3.23
Special Educator 31	District D	High School	3.82
Special Educator 32	District D	High School	3.68
Special Educator 33	District D	High School	3.55
Special Educator 34	District D	High School	3.27
Special Educator 35	District D	High School	3.09
Special Educator 36	District D	High School	3.50

Note. Responses range from 1- *Not at all Important* to 4- *Extremely Important*.

Survey data was analyzed further to examine which HLP items were ranked all 36 participants as most impactful to retention. Table 4 reports the overall average ratings across the 22 assessed HLPs. No distinction is made for grade level in this data analysis. All ratings were rated in the 3-*Important* to 4-*Extremely Important* range. No participants had an overall average rating of 1- *Not at all Important* or 2-*Minimally Important*. Two participants provided a score of 1- *Not at all Important* to a HLP and they were at the middle school and high school, respectively. Fifteen participants reported a score of 2-*Minimally Important* on one or more items at all four grade levels. The majority of ratings were scores of 3-*Important* to 4-*Extremely Important.*

At the average item analysis level, all ratings were rated in the 3- *Important* to 4-*Extremely Important* range. No participants had an overall average rating of 1-*Not at all Important* or 2-*Minimally Important*. Two participants provided a score of 1-*Not at all Important* HLP and they were at the middle school and high school, respectively. Fifteen

participants reported a score of 2-*Minimally Important* on one or more items at all four

grade levels. The majority of ratings were scores of 3- *Important* or 4- *Extremely*

Important.

Table 4

Mean Participant Rankings of High Leverage Practices (combined grade levels)

High Leverage Practice	High Leverage Practice Activity	Mean Score
HLP 7	Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment	3.83
HLP 18	Use strategies to promote active student engagement	3.81
HLP 1	Collaborate with professionals to increase student success	3.72
HLP 6	Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustment that improve student outcomes	3.67
HLP 8	Teachers provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior	3.67
HLP 22	Teachers provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior	3.67
HLP 4	Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs	3.61
HLP 9	Teach social behaviors	3.58
HLP 13	Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals	3.58
HLP 15	Provide scaffolded supports	3.58
HLP 2	Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families	3.56
HLP 3	Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services	3.56
HLP 5	Interpret and communicate assessment information with stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs	3.56
HLP 19	Use assistive and instructional technologies	3.56
HLP 20	Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings	3.50
HLP 12	Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal	3.47
HLP 14	Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence	3.47
HLP 16	Use explicit instruction	3.47
HLP 11	Identify and prioritize long- and short-term learning goals	3.36
HLP 10	Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans	3.33
HLP 17	Use flexible grouping	3.33
HLP 21	Provide intensive instruction	3.06

Note. HLP = High leverage practice; Data sorted by Mean Score from most impactful to least impactful on special education retention.

Findings for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked: *How do the ratings for special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?*

Whereas Research Question 1 examined the overall ratings of special educators as they rate the importance of HLP professional development as helping them perform their teaching jobs, Research Question 2 sought to examine these trends by the grade level assignment of the special educator.

The survey data adapted from the Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center's (2017) work on HLPs was analyzed further. A total of 43 participants responded to the survey that was distributed from their district leadership. Participants were asked about their professional development experiences with HLP in special education with the following instructions: "For the below twenty-two questions, please rate the importance of the HLP professional development topics that have helped you remain in the special education field. There are no right or wrong answers to the below questions. Different people will find certain topics more important than others in helping them to maintain longer in the profession."

Of the total 36 survey participants, 14% of survey respondents reported they work with preschool (*n* = 5), 44% with elementary (*n* = 16), 17% with middle school (*n* = 6), and 25% with high school (*n* = 9). From the five participating districts, no participants reported affiliation with a post high school transition program.

To address Research Question 2, total mean survey scores for each participant were calculated and coded by grade level. Furthermore, grade levels responses were

analyzed by instructional grade level bands across the four HLP domains of: Collaboration, Assessment, Social/Emotional/Behavioral, and Instruction.

Data indicates that preschool and elementary special educators rated professional development in HLPs impacting their retention at a higher level than secondary educators in middle school and high school. All grade levels rated professional development in HLPs as having impacted their retention in the field at 3- *Important* level according to the average scores of 3.6, 3.65, 3.35, and 3.44. A rating average of 4.0 would signify the 4- *Extremely Important* range. No participants had an overall average rating of 1- *Not at all Important* or 2- *Minimally Important*.

Grade levels responses were also analyzed by instructional grade level bands across the four HLP domains of: Collaboration, Assessment, Social/ Emotional/ Behavioral, and Instruction. All grade levels rated professional development in HLPs as having impacted their retention in the field at 3- *Important* level according to the average scores. Of note, were the differences in the Assessment domain as rated by grade level special educators. The Assessment domain was rated higher by preschool, elementary, and high school, though was the lowest rating of middle school special educators. The Assessment domain included the following three HLPs: (a) HLP 4. Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs, (b) HLP 5. Interpret and communicate assessment information with stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs, and (c) HLP 6. Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustment that improve student outcomes.

Table 5 reports the individual participants average ratings by grade level and their reporting of how high leverage professional development has impacted their retention in the field. It is also interesting to point out that total survey average scores were higher for primary grades of preschool and elementary, when compare to middle and high school aged special educators.

Table 5

Mean Participant Rankings of High Leverage Practices by Domain and Grade Level as Related to Impact on Special Educator Teacher Retention

High Leverage Practice Domain	Preschool	Elementary	Middle School	High School
HLP 1-3 Collaboration	3.53	3.67	3.39	3.59
HLP 4-6 Assessment	3.73	3.73	3.22	3.71
HLP 7-10 Social/ Emotional/ Behavioral	3.6	3.72	3.42	3.31
HLP 11-22 Instruction	3.58	3.61	3.35	3.53
Total Average	3.6	3.65	3.35	3.44

Note. HLP = High leverage practice; Preschool ($n = 5$), Elementary ($n = 16$), Middle School ($n = 6$), and High School ($n = 9$).

Findings for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked: *How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges describe the impact of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center on their decision to remain in the profession?*

Research Question 3 was answered by conducting an analysis of interview data from 10 special educators to elicit their perceptions on the impact HLPs professional development may have on their longevity. Of the 28 possible interview participants who were contacted, responded, confirmed, and attended a follow up interview, 10 interviews were held with at least one participant from each participating district. Based on interest

and availability, five interview participants were elementary special educators, three high
school special educators, one a preschool special educator, and one a middle school
special educator.

Data collection was gathered during semi-structured, in-depth interviews using an
interview protocol aligned with the theoretical framework on HLPs. Interviews were
conducted using Zoom as well as it's audio recording and transcription features.
Transcripts were reviewed by the research against the audio recording for accuracy. Data
was then coded to establish major themes and 10% of the data was double coded to
ensure inter-coding reliability. After analyzing the data, frequent responses established
three major themes related to Research Question 3. The major themes are presented in
Table 6 by frequency of grade level special educator followed by narrative descriptions
of the themes containing direct quotes from participants.

Table 6

Retention Themes, Frequency Counts, and Percentage of Themes

Themes	Total Themes	Total Theme Percentage
Negative Impact to Retention	0	0%
Neutral/ No Impact Identified to Retention	40	36%
Positive Impact to Retention	72	64%

Note. Total of retention themes recorded ($n =112$).

Three major themes emerged from the data regarding reasons HLPs professional
development supported teacher retention. The frequencies ranged from 0 to 72 for these
three themes, with participants mentioning each them 0 to 10 occasions.

Theme 1. Negative Impact to Retention

During the interviews, participants were asked questions which aligned to the
work of the CEC and CEEDAR Center (2019) HLPs for special educators. The first

theme of note is the absence of any negative impact reporting from of prior HLP

professional development. Of 112 coded themes, none were reported to have a negative

impact on retention. Therefore, none of the 10 participants interviewed reported a

negative impact to any high leverage professional development they received.

Theme 2. Neutral/No Impact Identified to Retention

Another important theme from the data with a frequency of 40 responses from

eight of the 10 participants were statements that demonstrated no clear impact on

retention. Participant responses contributing to this theme included concepts, such as: (a)

neutral communications, (b) communications that reported limited impact on retention, or

(c) statements that report value of the HLP but remained silent on its impact with

retention.

Some participants reported limited impact to retention, such as Special Educator 1

indicating: "I'm not going to leave the field because of professional development …they

just enhance what I do." Special Educator 4 indicated "I don't think the professional

development that I attended around interpreting and communicating assessment result has

impacted me to stay in special education." Furthermore, this educator stated,

> Using data has been extremely helpful in writing efficient and effective IEP, so all
>
> the professional developments that I've had I've appreciated that very much.
>
> However, the topic itself has not necessarily inspired me to stay in special
>
> education profession, if anything, it made me more anxious about. If we want to
>
> really write a good IEP, there's so much that goes with that. (Special Educator 4)

Other statements were neutral/no impact theme was highlighted by Special Educator 7 who shared that HLP 8 is, "probably less impactful than the other areas just based on the needs of my student population… and probably less impactful in retention for me personally." Additionally, they shared, regarding HLP 11, that they loved the training and found "it's meaningful for the students. But as far as retention, it's not super impactful for me personally" (Special Educator 7).

Additionally, some educators indicated HLP was a responsibility of their role, but not tied to retention. For example, special educator 8, stated

> I know using data to develop IEPs is important, but it's not a big factor of why I choose to stay in the field. It's just something I have to do, that I need to do, in order to develop that IEP for the best success of the student or to benefit the student.

Sometimes participants remarked on the value of the HLP, but answered in such a way as to remain silent on its impact to retention. For example, Special Educator 8 remarked on HLP 11 scaffolding, indicating "I'd like that we get to scaffold and use curriculum to adapt the curriculum. I think it's really important, because we know that they're all at different levels. And some need a little more scaffolding than others."

Lastly, several special educators reported not having had professional development in given high level practice areas. For example, Special Educator 4, stated the following regarding HLP 8: "I have not attended professional development around that." These types of statements were coded as neutral response thus not contributing to themes of retention.

Theme 3. Positive Impact to Retention

Five major positive themes emerged from the data regarding reasons HLPs professional development supported teacher retention, with a frequency of 72 references from all 10 participants. These positive themes included: (a) general positive impacts, (b) instructional effectiveness, (c) self-concept/well-being, (d) develop professionally/ engagement, and (e) classroom environment. The frequencies ranged from 0 to 6 for these five themes, with 1 to 5 participants mentioning each theme.

General Positive Impacts. Many participants reported a general positive impact of professional development in HLPs on retention. Some statements were more general in nature, such as Special Educator 8 and 10, stating that they were "impacted in a positive way" and "a positive impact" respectively. Other educators provide more specific general positive statements, such as Special Educator 1 stating: "When you're feeling good and positive about what you're teaching and excited about what you're teaching, I think that keeps you coming back every day." Special Educator 1 also indicated on another question, "when you get new information or are reminded of other things, it definitely motivates you, excites you, inspires you to share and to enhance your teaching with your kids." In another example, Special Educator 2 indicated "My collaboration with occupational therapist and speech therapist in particular, has really been a fun part of teaching which has helped me want to retain a teaching profession." Finally, Special Educator 3, stated:

> We've had lots of trainings on this… I'm in my 18 year right now. We've had
> reminders on how to do this a lot and so that keeps me fresh in my head about

being able to do it on the fly, because in the middle school setting it, things happen fast, and everything is constantly changing. So, this is very important.

Instructional Effectiveness. Some positive comments cited training in HLPs as resulting in improvement in the special educators instruction effectiveness as well as retention in the field. For example, Special Educator 4 stated, "Using data to adjust instruction was very helpful, because it's help me run my classes more efficiently and smoothly, and that really encouraged me to continue to remain in special education teaching profession." Special Educator 7 indicated, "As far as explicit trainings, like the literacy Orton Gillingham training, and like curriculum-based trainings, have been the most meaningful for me."

Special Educator 6 expanded on the impact of their training indicating:

I think going through Orton Gillingham has just changed my whole teaching…The growth and development that I have seen with my students in teaching it. It's also their love for it, I mean they come in and it's OG time and they thrive on it. I haven't seen that level of learning before. So that's been a huge one for me and others. It's my experience, and through all the trainings we've had. I just I have a special place in my heart for special education students and I want them to succeed. It's my students who make me stay.

Self-Concept/Well-Being. Another theme coded were positive statements made regarding improved self-concept or well-being. Some statements were more general in nature, such as Special Educator 5 indicating that professional development "helps take away the stress or the anxiety." Special Educator 10 stated the high leverage professional development "was helpful just to not feel overwhelmed." Special Educator 2 reported

that this training was "important to help my stress level go down to continue to remain in the field."

Special Educator 2 highlighted an important concept regarding professional development, engagement, and retention when she stated:

I think I can learn more about engagement strategies…because I feel like right now all of the engagement comes from my high energy and that's hard to retain all day long. I do feel burnt out at the end of the day…because all of the engagement, excitement, and energy is coming from me. So, I need to learn more ways to, and remove myself a little bit. Talk about retention.

This quote heighted an important connection between training and retention.

A final connection between professional development, HLPs, and retention was illustrated by positive themes of well-being via increased optimism. In this example, Special Educator 4, stated:

Professional development in collaborating with families is something that I just recently have been engaged in. It's absolutely encouraged me to be hopeful and look positive around the future of special education, because the professional development was very family-centered… You know that definitely provided me with optimism to remain in the field.

Develop Professionally/Engagement. Some educators reported positive themes related to their development as professionals. For example, Special Educators 5 indicated: "When professional development…. is forward thinking, I would always feel like I'm challenging myself as a professional to be just a bit better. …It goes back to the idea that I feel like I'm doing a good job." Special Educator 7 stated, "This is one of the

reasons why I love being in my job, is being able to report data in a meaningful way and in a way that's accurate and reliable." Special Educator 6 shared that

[W]e talk about social emotional learning (SEL) in our professional development through special ed also, even general education. With the SEL, I think I just want to make them feel successful about themselves. So, it's the students who impact me and their needs that keep me in there.

Special Educator 4 described,

Yeah, that was very important professional development. Because through scaffolding and curriculum adaptation, I was able to allow access for my students. My students had more access to the core curriculum, and that in return, encouraged me and inspired me, kept me motivated to stay in special education.

Some special educators cited positive professional engagement. For example, Special Educator 5 shared that the professional development

Gives you the energy or a little bit more of that passion, because you're able to communicate and talk to other people who are learning new things as well and like, 'hey, did this work for you?' It's like engagement for adult learners, which is exciting. It's invigorating, you know, when you're learning new things, and you're trying new things. And they're working.

Special Educator 10 described,

I think I just like learning. If you like learning, then you like learning about teaching students how to learn, right? At a conference,… it's interesting and exciting. You're meeting people that are experts and whatever they're doing right, there's like an energy to it. And I think that, like sparks, your interest.

Classroom Environment. Our final positive theme linking professional development in HLPs to retention was related to improvements within the classroom environment. For example, general positive classroom environment statements included Special Educator 10 stating, "learning about environmental factors in a classroom is maybe be the single most important thing that I've learned…that was a huge impact for me, even just designing, furniture flow in your classroom or the environment." Special Educator 1 further emphasized the important by stating "if you don't have that effective learning environment, your class is going to fail. And then you're not going to have a good year. So that's definitely really important."

Several other special educators cited increased professional engagement upon learning new instructional environmental strategies. For example, Special Educator 2 stated,

> Learning how to get a student to do it across different environments with different people is highly important, and learning those strategies definitely helps me want to remain in the field because you get excited when you see the students doing it with other people.

Special Educator 4 added "I've learned some new ways to create learning environments for the kids. And it kept my interest high." Lastly, Special Educator 7 indicated "training on how to organize groups; that's been a huge one. And that's super impactful and makes a big difference within the classroom and how it functions. So, I would say, that is highly impactful".

Table 7 illustrates the various types of positive themes identified in the current study.

Table 7

Positive Themes by Retention Impact, Frequency Counts, and Percentage of Themes

Positive Themes	Total Themes	Percentage of Positive Themes
General Positive Impact to Retention	22	31%
Positive Impact to Retention- Instructional Effectiveness	12	17%
Positive Impact to Retention - Self Concept/Well-Being	14	19%
Positive Impact to Retention - Develop Professionally	17	23%
Positive Impact - Classroom Environment	7	10%

Note. Total positive themes recorded ($n = 72$).

Findings for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked: *How do the descriptions for the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?*

Research Question 4 was addressed by conducting an analysis of interview data from 10 special educators by grade level groupings to elicit their perceptions on the impact HLPs professional development may have on their longevity. Of the 10 special educators interviewed five interview participants were elementary special educators, three high school special educators, one a preschool special educator, and one a middle school special educator.

The same three major themes related to Research Question 3 were again revisited, but now analyzed by grade level. The impact of HLPs professional development was most pronounced in primary grades of preschool and elementary, lessening drastically in impact by high school special educators. Middle school special educators reported a

83

similar trend to their elementary counterparts. No special educators in all four grade

bands reported a negative impact to retention.

The major themes gleaned from Research Question 4 are presented in Table 8 by

frequency of all four grade level special educators. Also presented is the magnitude of

impact that HLP professional development has on the retention of special educators by

grade level.

Table 8

Themes of Special Education Retention Professional Development Impact by Grade Level

Themes	Preschool	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Negative Impact to Retention	0%	0%	0%	0%
Neutral/No Impact Identified to Retention	18%	25%	33%	65%
Positive Impact to Retention	82%	75%	67%	35%

Note. Preschool ($n = 1$), Elementary ($n = 5$), Middle School ($n = 1$), and High School ($n = 3$).

Summary

This chapter focused on the data and findings regarding the four research

questions guiding this study. The first purpose of this mixed-methods study was to

determine how experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary,

middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate the importance

of professional development topics identified as HLPs in special education by CEC and

CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs, and to determine how the

ratings of the different groups compare to one another.

The first purpose related to Research Questions 1 and 2 was based on the

qualitative survey results of 26 special educators with three or more years within the

field. Survey data was analyzed to examine which HLP items were ranked as most

impactful to retention. Through data analysis it was determined that all 22 HLPs areas received average ratings in the 3- *Important* to 4- *Extremely Important* range. No participants had an overall average rating of 1- *Not at all Important* or 2- *Minimally Important*.

For Research Question 2, qualitative survey results were reviewed to ascertain grade level implications. It was found that average scores were higher within primary grade special educators of preschool and elementary, when compared to middle and high school aged special educators. Data indicates that preschool and elementary special educators rated professional development in HLPs impacting their retention at a higher level than secondary educators in middle school and high school. All grade levels rated professional development in HLPs as having impacted their retention in the field at 3- *Important* level. No participants had an overall average rating of 1- *Not at all Important* or 2- *Minimally Important*.

Grade levels responses were also analyzed by instructional grade level bands across the four HLP domains of: (a) Collaboration, (b) Assessment, (c) Social/ Emotional/Behavioral, and (d) Instruction. All grade levels rated professional development in HLPs as having impacted their retention in the field at 3- *Important* level according to the average scores. Of note were the differences in the Assessment domain as rated by grade level special educators. The Assessment domain was rated higher by preschool, elementary, and high school, though was the lowest rating of middle school special educators.

A second purpose of the study was to describe the impact these professional development topics identified as HLPs in special education by the Council for

Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center have on experienced special education teachers' in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition grade level ranges decision to remain in the profession and how the descriptions of the different groups compare to one another. The second purpose related to Research Questions 3 and 4. Findings from Research Question 3 identified two major qualitative themes with participants identifying positive and neutral themes when attributing their retention to HLPs professional development. Positive themes were highlighted in the areas of: (a) general positive impacts, (b) instructional effectiveness, (c) self-concept/well-being, (d) develop professionally/engagement, and (e) classroom environment. No participants reported a negative impact to their retention based HLPs professional development.

For Research Question 4, impact of HLPs professional development was analyzed by the special educators grade level. The most pronounced impact was noted in primary grades of preschool and elementary (82% and 75% positive themes, respectively) with a lessening impact by high school special educators (35% of participants reporting a positive theme), whereas middle school special educators (67%) reported a similar positive impact trend to their elementary counterparts.

The subsequent Chapter V will discuss the research findings in greater detail. Major and unexpected findings as well as conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research. Finally, the chapter will draw culminate with the author's final reflections.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V provides a research study overview including a review of the study's purpose statement, research questions, methods, population, and sample. The chapter's primary function is to highlight major findings, unexpected findings, research conclusions, and finally, implications for actions based on the conclusions. Finally, this chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and closing remarks.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate the importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs, and to determine how the ratings of the different groups compare to one another. A second purpose was to describe the impact these professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center have on experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition grade level ranges decision to remain in the profession and how the descriptions of the different groups compare to one another.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed within the current research study:

1. How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate the

importance of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs?

2. How do the ratings for special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?

3. How do experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges describe the impact of professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center on their decision to remain in the profession?

4. How do the descriptions for the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges compare to one another?

Research Methods

The current study is a mixed-method descriptive comparative design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative survey methodology (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A quantitative approach will be used to rate experienced special educator's professional development perception of different professional development topics and how their experience with these topics impact their retention in the field of special education. A qualitative approach will then be applied to conduct follow-up interviews with special educators regarding the influence their professional development has had on their retention in the field. Such information will best align to the research questions and provide a contribution to this research area.

Population

The population for this research study was teachers, particularly special education teachers. According to an April 2021 report by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, in the 2019-2020 school year, there were 306, 261 teachers in the state of California and 17, 979 new teaching credentials issued. In the 2019-2020 school year, approximately 7.3 million 3 to 21-year students or 14% of students in California Schools were identified as receiving special education services (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Therefore, the population for this study was the approximately 30, 626 special education teachers in California in the 2020-2021 school year based upon percentage of special education students.

Sample

The sampling frame for this study included all special education teachers in San Diego County, California currently employed in Escondido Union School District, Lakeside Union Elementary District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, San Diego County Office of Education, and Tulare Joint Union High School District. In the five districts selected, there were approximately 300 special educators employed at the time of this study. The sample subjects of this study were a subset of the sampling frame who completed all survey requirements with fidelity. Twenty-six special education teachers in the profession more than three years were included.

Major Findings

The current research study uncovered several important findings. These major findings provided insights to produce conclusions and subsequent implications for action. The following are two major findings:

High Leverage Practices Professional Development Topics Positively Impacting Special Educator Retention

This study examined how experienced special education teachers of three or more years rated and described the importance of professional development topics identified as HLPs in special education by the Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs. There were three important majority findings tied to grade level:

- All 22 HLPs had average rankings indicating they were important to all participants' retention in the special education field.

- HLPs in all four domains of: (a) Collaboration, (b) Assessment, (c) Social/ Emotional/Behavioral, and (c) Instruction were rated as important to special educator teacher retention.

- A majority of themes were positive and highlighted the areas of retention: (a) general positive impacts, (b) instructional effectiveness, (c) self-concept/well-being, (d) develop professionally/engagement, and (e) classroom environment. No participants reported a negative impact to their retention based HLPs professional development.

Grade level Influenced Ratings of the Importance of Professional Development in High Leverage Practices

This study examined how experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and adult transition program grade level ranges rate and described the importance of professional development topics identified as HLPs in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping

them perform their teaching jobs. There were three important majority findings tied to grade level:

- Although 22 HLPs areas received average ratings in the 3- *Important* to 4- *Extremely Important* range on quantitative measures, preschool and elementary special educators rated professional development in HLPs impacting their retention at a higher level than secondary educators in middle school and high school

- Grade level responses were also analyzed by instructional grade level bands across the four HLP domains of: (a) Collaboration, (b) Assessment, (c) Social/ Emotional/Behavioral, and (d) Instruction. Of note, the Assessment domain was rated higher by preschool, elementary, and high school, though was the lowest rating of middle school special educators

- The final major finding was seen when qualitative interview data was analyzed for the presence of positive retention themes. The most pronounced impact was noted in primary grades of preschool and elementary (82% and 75% positive themes of retention, respectively) with a lessening impact by high school special educators (35% of participants reported a positive theme). Middle school special educators (67%) reported a similar positive impact trend to their elementary counterparts

Unexpected Findings

There was one unexpected finding uncovered from this research:

Rate of Positive Impact for Professional Development as related to Retention

The unexpected finding was the rate of positive impact HLP professional development had in relation to special educators' retention. Whereas the researcher suspected that professional development in HLP areas would yield greater preparation in the field, the magnitude of the findings was higher than anticipated. All 22 HLPs areas received average ratings in the 3- *Important* to 4- *Extremely Important* range. No participants reported a negative impact to their retention based HLPs professional development.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Professional Development in High Leverage Practices is an essential component in retaining Special Education Teachers

The most evident research conclusion is that professional development in high leverage practices helps to retain special education teachers. Stated another way, professional development in HLPs functions as a protective factor in the careers of special educators. Both quantitative and qualitative data supported a clear trend of HLP professional development as positively impacting teacher retention.

Conclusion 2: Differentiated Professional Development

Professional development for special educators should be differentiated for staff based on their instructional grade band. Professional development in HLPs for special educator in preschool, elementary school, and middle school resulted in a positive retention impact (82%, 75%, and 67% positive themes, respectively), but this same trend

was not observed within high school educators (35% of participants reported a positive theme).

Grade level responses were also analyzed by instructional grade level bands across the four HLP domains of: (a) Collaboration, (b) Assessment, (c) Social/ Emotional/Behavioral, and (d) Instruction. All grade levels rated professional development in HLPs as having impacted their retention in the field at 3-*Important* level according to the average scores. Of note, the Assessment domain was rated higher by preschool, elementary, and high school, though was the lowest rating of middle school special educators.

Implications for Action

The current state of affairs, with a shortage of experienced special educators driven by poor retention, has put our most vulnerable students in the hands of new and underprepared teachers (Freedberg & Harrington, 2017). Prior research has identified HLPs as a foundation of criteria guiding teacher preparation and professional development efforts (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2019). Current research sought to extend this premise further to concepts of teacher retention. Research conclusions inspired the following six implications for urgent action at various influential levels. Actions implemented separately could yield positive contributions within the special educator retention crisis. Actions 1 through 6 implemented uniformly could improve all career cycles of special educators yielding long term solutions and stability in this vulnerable population of educators.

Implication for Action 1

Within the last five years, research has highlighted the need to embed training on high leverage instructional practices as a foundational element of special education teacher programs (McLeskey et al., 2018). In order to create long-term success in the careers of special educator teacher candidates, credential programs must redesign course of study to prioritize HLPs framework. The high leverage framework for professional development should be included within the three important level of teacher preparation: (a) university coursework, (b) field placement, and (c) teacher credentialing. Coursework across universities should build program requirements around four domains of HLP. Field placements should require evidence of mastery in each of the HLP areas as evidence by: (a) student portfolios, (b) feedback, (c) data collection, and (d) self-reflection of instructional effectiveness in these areas. Finally, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing should require professional development in HLPs beyond the evaluation requirements of the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). As each state has variations in credentialing requirements, individuals who participated in out-of-state college programs must meet minimum requirements in the state they seek to teach in (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021).

Implication for Action 2

Once hired, teacher induction programs are another source of support and training for new teachers. Teacher induction programs should prioritize professional development around a high leverage framework to directly address the special educator retention crisis. In California, the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System exists to address

the intensive needs of first-year teachers (CA Education Code, 1998). Its objective is "to build on the preparation that precedes initial certification, to transform academic preparation into practical success in the classroom, [and] to retain greater numbers of capable beginning teachers" (CA Education Code, 1998, p. 1). The law identifies school districts must develop and implement individualized support, assessment, and feedback of beginning teachers, as necessary for professional certification and based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CA Education Code, 1998). The induction program should implement HLPs professional development and standards for evaluation in each to area to address professional certification.

Implication for Action 3

Over a decade ago, research noted that districts could limit turnover by focusing on preventative measures such as targeted professional development (Butler, 2008). School district programs should prioritize onboarding orientation and annual professional development around a high leverage framework to proactively address the special educator retention crisis.

District onboarding programs should be based on the framework of HLPs. Most organizations use new-employee orientations, though a formal onboarding process focused on explicitly communicating the company's mission, individual roles, norms, and expected behaviors (Bauer, 2010). For special educators, the onboarding process also provides explicit professional practices and provides role clarity (Billingsly, 2004). These findings demonstrate the value of providing meaningful support to staff on the organization's practices and culture when onboarding new special education teachers or any new staff as critical to their success and retention. Professional development in HLPs

provides the role clarity and expected depth of instructional practice necessary to be a successful special educator.

School districts need to prioritize annual strategic and systematic professional development to support the complex needs of special educators. Currently, school districts are encouraged (but not required) to establish professional growth opportunities across a range of topics that support the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. Districts should be required to provide professional development in HLPs because it yields positive impacts for both students and staff alike.

Implication for Action 4

Regional County Offices of Education and SELPA should support districts by offering ongoing professional development in HLPs to help retain local special educators. Both entities are intermediaries between the state and local school districts. They both allow for the "pooling resources for professional development and coordinated supports that otherwise might not be affordable to an individual LEA, especially a small LEA" (Doutre et al., 2021, p. 39). California's SELPAs focus their support largely on legal compliance, but updated state legislation or education code could require annual SELPA's Local Plan to include uniform requirements in address HLP systematically within all California SELPAs (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021).

Implication for Action 5

There is a need for state action to enact guidelines that require professional development around HLPs for districts, county office of education, and SELPAs to address the special educator retention crisis. Given the findings, it is recommended TK-12 public schools invest in funding special educator professional learning opportunities

targeting development of HLPs. For example, California education code (EDC 44277 Professional Development) could be revised to acknowledge the importance of professional growth through a teacher's career and encourages teachers to engage in ongoing professional learning in HLPs (CDE, Special Education Division, 2021). Although some districts choose to implement robust training in high leverage instructional and assessment practices, there are no structured training requirements or outcomes that districts for special educators maintain. Currently, within the CDE, Special Education Division (2021), a legislative emphasis has been placed on dyslexia and early preschool intervention. This emphasis could be expanded to a professional development series or grant project which could support all districts in their implementation of HLPs.

Implication for Action 6

Lastly, there is a need for federal guidelines that prioritize professional development around HLPs to directly address the special educator retention crisis. In 2000, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2000) identified components of effective professional development programs. New research supports further definition to encompassing the use of HLPs to ensure local education agency responsiveness under the federal requirements of the IDEA. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs should adopt a position statement on the importance of utilizing HLPs for students and training staff in these same practices to simultaneously address teacher effectiveness and retention.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the researcher recommends further research be completed with a larger sample size and expanded beyond California special educators. Additionally, more research on professional development methodologies (training in person verses virtual, collaborative verses lecture based, etc.) that special educators find most effective would provide additional practical contributions to the field. Regarding the broader topic of special educator teacher retention, future studies are recommended examining retention post COVID-19 pandemic, particularly comparing pre/post COVID teacher cohorts and their retention. Additionally, the topic of special educator retention should continue to be studied to explore further protective factors that positively influence retention. Finally, updated research on the reasons special education teachers leave; whether they leave the profession entirely, leave for a different position in special education , or leave for a non-special education teaching position. Future research will only help to codify current research findings.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

As a 15-year special educator administrator, this researcher sought to explore the real-world topic of special educator teacher retention while also seeking to build upon the research of HLPs as a comprehensive, research based professional development structure (McLeskey et al., 2017). The most evident research conclusion is that professional development in HLPs acts as a protective factor in the careers of special educators. Careful investment in our special educators will ultimately address some of their primary reasons for attrition, not feeling sufficiently trained and supported. Proven professional development practices for special educators is invaluable knowledge for resource limited

educational entities seeking to retain the unique and precious resource, a highly

exceptional special educator.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Literature Matrix

Article	Authors	Year	Introduction/Context	New special education teachers	Changing Employee teachers	Retention	Mentoring Programs	Professional Development	Training-College Programs	Training-Professional Standards	Training After Employment-Onboarding	Training after Employment-Induction	Training After Employment-Ongoing	Training Topic-Cultural Awareness	Training Topic-HLP Assessment	Training Topic-HLP Collaboration	Training Topic-HLP Instruction	Training Topic-HLP Social/Emo/Beh	Training Topic-Legal Obligations	Training Topic-District Procedures	Training Topics-IEP Dev
First-year teachers and retention.	.	2000	x																		
What do first-year special education teachers need?	.	2000	x																		
School-University Partnerships in Special Education Preparation.	.	2002																			
Professional development for teachers.	.	2000						x													
Project ReSpecT: Toward an Evidence-Based Mentoring Model for Induction Teachers.	.	2013					x														
Bridging the gap between theory and practice: Counmecting course with Field Experiences	Allsopp, D.H.	2006				x		x													
Defining the mentoring relationship of beginning special education teachers	Amos, B.A.	2005	x			x															
Onboarding	Bauer, T.	2010							x												
Newcomer adjustment during organizational socialization: A meta-analytic review of antecedents, outcomes and methods.	Bauer, T. N., Bodner, T., Erdogan, B., Truxillo, D. M., & Tucker, J. S.	2007							x												
Exceptionality	Bays, D.A. & Crockett, J. B.	2007			x																
Issues in special education teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development:Considerations in supporting rural teachers.	Berry, A.B., Petrin, R.A., Gravelle, M.L., & Farmer, T. W.	2011	x				x										x				
Improving working conditions to support special educators effectiveness: A call for leadership.	Billingsley, B., Bettini, E., Morris Mathews, H. & McLeskey, J.	2020	x		x							x									
Promoting teacher quality and retention in special education	Billingsley, B.S.	2004	x	x	x																
Special education teacher retention and attrition: A critical analysis of the research literature	Billingsley, B.S.	2004	x	x	x																
Supporting special education teacher induction through high-leverage practices	Billingsley, B.S., Bettini, E., Jones, N. D., McLeskey, J., Billingsley, B. S., Brownell, M. T., & Matheady, L. J.	2019								x											
Supporting new special education teachers	Billingsley, B.S., Israel, M., & Smith, S.	2011	x	x			x														
Differences in beginning special education teachers: the influence of personal attributes, preparation,	Bishop, A.G., Brownell, M. T., Klingner, J. K., Leko, M. M., & Galman, S. A. C.	2010		x								x					x				
Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement.	Boyd, D.J., Grossman, P. L., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J.	2009				x	x								x						
Keeping the committed	Boyer	2000	x		x	x															
Learning From Collaboration: The Role of Teacher Qualities.	Brownell, M. T., Adams, A., & Sindelar, P.	2006												x							

Training Topic-Stress M.	Training Topics-IEP Dev.	Training Topics-District Procedures	Training Topic- Legal Obligations	Training Topic- HLP Social/Emot/Beh	Training Topic- HLP Instruction	Training Topic- HLP Collaboration	Training Topic-HLP Assessment	Training Topic-Cultural Awareness	Training After Employment -Ongoing	Training after Employment-Induction	Training After Employment-Onboarding	Training -Professional Standards	Training-College Programs	Professional Development	Mentoring Programs	Retention	Changing Employee Landscape	New special education teachers	Introduction/Context	Year	Authors	Article
											x				x						Brownell, M.T	Advocating for Lifelong Learning. Professional Development, and Support.
			x								x				x						Brownell, M.T., Sindelar, P. T., Kiely, M. T., & Danielson, L. C.	Special Education Teacher Quality and Preparation: Exposing Foundations, Constructing a New Model.
							x								x						Bruder, M. B., & Dunst, C. J.	Personnel Preparation in Recommended Early Intervention Practices: Degree of Emphasis Across Disciplines
											x				x						Bruno, L. P., Scott, L. A., & Willis, C.	A Survey of Alternative and Traditional Special Education Teachers' Perception of Preparedness.
					x																Buell, M. J., Hallam, R. A., & Gamel-McCormick, M.	A survey of general and special education teachers' perceptions and inservice needs concerning inclusion.
																x				x	Butler, K.	Desperately Seeking Special Ed Teachers
															x						CA ED Code	EDC 44277 Professional Development
												x									CA ED Code	ECD 44279.1 BTSA
													x				x				Carpenter, L.B., & Dyal, A.	Retaining quality special educators: a prescription for school principals in the 21st century.
																					Cavitt, D. (2021).	The Opportunities of 2021.
																			x		Chao, G. T, O'Leary-Kelly, A. M., Wolf, S., Klein, H. J., & Gardner, P. D.	Organizational socialization: Its content and consequences
														x						x	Commission on Teacher Credentialing	California Standards for the Teaching Profession
							x								x						Council of Exceptional Children	High Leverage Practices in Special Education: Assessment Practices: Research Syntheses
						x															Council of Exceptional Children	High Leverage Practices in Special Education: Collaboration Practices: Research Syntheses
					x																Council of Exceptional Children	High Leverage Practices in Special Education: Instructional Practices: Research Syntheses
				x																	Council of Exceptional Children	High Leverage Practices in Special Education: Social Emotional/Behavioral Practices: Research Syntheses
																		x			Crowley, M.	How The Wrong People Get Promoted And How To Change It
																		x			Crowley, M.	Lead From The Heart: Transformational Leadership For The 21st Century
																		x			Diggs, T. R.	Exceptional Leadership in Exceptional Times: Perspectives and Ideologies of Special Education Directors in Southern California.

Article	Authors	Year	Introduction/Context	New special education teachers	Changing Employee teachers	Retention	Changing Employee Landscape	Mentoring Programs	Professional Development	Training-College Programs	Training-Professional Standards	Training After Employment-Onboarding	Training after Employment-Induction	Training After Employment-Ongoing	Training Topic-Cultural Awareness	Training Topic-HLP Assessment	Training Topic-HLP Collaboration	Training Topic-HLP Instruction	Training Topic-HLP Social Emot/Beh	Training Topic-Legal Obligations	Training Topics-District Procedures	Training Topic-IEP Dev-Stress M
Developing effective special education reading teachers: the influence of professional development, context, and individual qualities	Dingle, M. P., Brownell, M.T., Leko, M.M., Boardman, A.G., & Haager, D.	2011						x														
An Analysis of Social Skills Instruction Provided in Teacher Education and In-Service Training Programs for General and Special Educators.	Dobbins, N., Higgins, K., Pierce, T., Tandy, R. D., & Tincani, M.	2010															x					
Special Education Teacher Induction: The Wiki Way.	Donne, V., & Lin, F.-Y.	2013									x											
The Professional Development School Without Walls.	Epanchin, B. C., & Colucci, K.	2002						x														
Effectiveness of Online Professional Development for Rural Special Educators.	Erickson, A. S. G., Noonan, P. M., & McCall, Z.	2012						x														
Legislative Advocacy for Special Educators.	Fisher, K., & Miller, K. M.	2021																				
Teaching Beliefs and Their Relationship to Professional Development in Special Education Teachers.	Francois, J.	2020						x														
Special education in "deep trouble" and still needs reform, says California ed board president	Freedberg, L., & Harrington, T.	2017	x	x																		
The Effects of Transformational Leadership and the Sense of Calling on Job Burnout among Special Education Teachers	Gong, T., Zimmerli, L., & Hoffer, H. E.	2013			x																	
Promoting Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Students With Significant Disabilities.	Harmon, C., Kassa-Hendrickson, C., & Neal, L. V. I.	2009											x									
Employee Engagement on the Rise in the U.S. Gallup	Harter, J.	2018		x																		
Special Education Teacher Preparation and the Electronic Portfolio.	Herner, L. M., Karayan, S., & McKean, G.	2003							x													
Overworked and underappreciated: special education teachers describe stress and attrition.	Hester, O. R., Bridges, S. A., & Rollins, L. H.	2020	x			x				x											x	
Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining Highly Qualified Teachers	Hornick-Lockard, B.	2019	x			x				x												
Applications of Video-Conferencing Technology in Special Education Teacher Preparation.	Israel, M., Knowlton, E., Griswold, D., & Rowland, A.	2009							x													
Partnerships for Dual Preparation in Elementary, Secondary, and Special Education Programs.	Jenkins, A. A., Pateman, B., & Black, R. S.	2002							x													
Pathways to Leadership and Professional Development.	Kaufman, R. C., & Ring, M.	2011						x														
An Induction Program for Special Education Teachers.	Kennedy, V., & Burstein, N.	2004																				
The effectiveness of an organizational- level orientation training program in the socialization of new hires	Klein, H. J., & Weaver, N. A.	2000						x		x												
Contexts, Funding History, and Implications for Evaluating the Office of Special Education Program's Investment in Personnel Preparation.	Kleinhammer-Tramill, J., Tramill, J., & Brace, H.	2010						x														
Examining the schoolwide "spread" of research-based practices.	Klingner, J. K., Arguelles, M. E., & Hughes, M. T.	2001														x						

Article	Authors	Year	Introduction/Context	New special education teachers	Changing Employee teachers	Retention	Mentoring Programs	Professional Development	Training-College Programs	Training-Professional Standards	Training After Employment-Onboarding	Training after Employment-Induction	Training After Employment-Ongoing	Training Topic-Cultural Awareness	Training Topic-HLP Assessment	Training Topic-HLP Collaboration	Training Topic-HLP Instruction	Training topic-HLP Social Emotion/Beh	Training Topic-Legal Obligations	Training Topics-District Procedures	Training Topics-IEP Dev	Training Topic-Stress M.
Special education administration at a crossroads: availability, licensure, and preparations of special education administrators.	Lashley, C. & Boscardin, M.L.	2003	x		x																	
Retaining Beginning Special Educators: What Should Administrators Know and Do?	Leko, M.M. & Smith, S.W.	2010	x																			
IEP 101: Practical Tips for Writing and Implementing Individual Education Programs.	Lesh, J. J.	2020																		x		
The Comprehensive Evaluation of Professional Development Software: A Critique of Methodology.	Liaupsin, C. J.	2003					x															
Becoming culturally inclusive: a perspective on personnel preparation.	Lim, L.	2001										x										
Research Into Practice Through Professional Development.	Little, M. E., & Houston, D.	2003				x	x															
Preparing Special Educators to Assume Collaborative and Consultative Roles.	Long, T. J., Brown, C., & Nagy-Rado, A.	2007												x								
Strategies for Effective Teaching in the Twenty-First Century: A Supplement for Special Education.	Louisiana State Dept. of Education, B. R.	2004													x							
Book Talks in Special Education Methods Courses: Using Literature to Influence, Inspire, and Prepare Teacher Candidates.	Marable, M. A., Leavitt-Noble, K., & Grande, M.	2010						x														
Project ReSpecT: Toward an Evidence-Based Mentoring Model for Induction Teachers	Marshall, K. et al.	2013																				
Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the 2004-05 teacher follow-up survey	Marvel, J., Lyter, D.M., Peltola, P., Strizek, G.A., & Morton, B. A.	2006				x																
Anatomy of a mentoring program for new special education teachers	Mason, C. Y., & White, M.	2007		x		x																
High Leverage Practices in Special Education	McLeskey et al	2017				x	x						x		x	x						
Using High-Leverage Practices in Teacher Preparation to Reduce the Research-to-Practice Gap in Inclusive Settings	McLeskey, Billingsley, & Ziegler	2018					x															
Professional development and inclusive schools: reflections on effective practice.	McLeskey, J., & Waldron, N. L.	2002																				
Handbook of effective inclusive schools: Research and practice.	J., Waldron, N., Spooner, F., & Al	2014																x				
Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry	McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S.	2010	x																			
Online Staff Development for Teachers: Multi-State Planning for Implementation	Meyen, E. L., & Yang, C.-H.	2005					x															
A National Assessment of Staff Development Needs Related to the Education of Students with Disabilities.	Meyen, E. L., Ramp, E., & Harrod, C. A.	2003					x											x				

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Article	Authors	Year	Introduction/content	New special education teachers	Changing Employee Landscape	Retention	Mentoring Programs	Professional Development	Training-College Programs	Training-Professional Standards	Training After Employment-Onboarding	Training after Employment-Induction	Training After Employment -Ongoing	Training Topic-Cultural Awareness	Training Topic-HLP Assessment	Training Topic- HLP Collaboration	Training Topic -HLP Instruction	Training Topic- HLP Social Instruction	Training Topic- Legal Obligations	Training Topics-District Procedures	Training Topics-Stress Mgmt/IEP Dev.
Reviewing Special Education Teacher Preparation Field Experience Placements, Activities, and Research: Do We Know the Difference Maker?	Nagro, S. A., & deBettencourt, L. U.	2017						x													
Special Education Teacher Preparation in Classroom Management: Implications for Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.	Oliver, R. M., & Reschly, D. J.	2010													x						
School-University Partnerships in Special Education Field Experiences.	Prater, M. A., & Sileo, T. W.	2002				x		x													
Does new teacher induction really improve retention?	Ronfeldt, M. & McQueen, K.	2017																			
Preparing teachers to meet the needs of students with severe disabilities: program configuration and expertise.	Ryndak, D. L., Clark, D., & Conroy, M.	2001														x					
Teacher Education Reform Within University Special Education Programs.	Sapona, R., Etienne, J., & Bauer, A.	2006						x													
The Power of Mentoring in the Career Preparation of Special Education Administrators.	Smith, C. S.	2013				x															
Teacher education.	Smith, S.	2000	x																		
Teachers of Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders Reported Professional Development Needs: Differences Between Fully Licensed and Emergency-Licensed Teachers.	Sutherland, K. S., Denny, R. K., & Gunter, P. L.	2005													x						
Creative Solutions to the Special Education Teacher Shortage	Tikos, T	2019				x					x										
Preparing Preservice Educators for Cultural Diversity: How Far Have We Come?	Trent, S. C., Kea, C. D., & Oh, K.	2008							x												
Assessing longitudinal change of and dynamic relationships among role stressors, job attitudes, turnover intentions, and well-being in neophyte newcomers.	Vandenberghe, C., Panaccio, A., Bentein, K., Mignonac, K., & Rousseel, P.	2010					x														
Supports for Special Education: A focus on scheduling professional development, and accountability ensures every student gets the resources they need.	Vigil, B. & Shroyer-King, J.	2020															x	x			
Preparing teachers to support inclusion: preservice and inservice programs.	Villa, R. A., Thousand, J. S., & Chapple, J. W.	1996															x	x			
Promoting Special Educator Teacher Retention.	Vittek, J. E.	2015	x		x																
The Western Carolina University Teacher Support Program: A Multi-Component Program to Improve and Retain Special Educators.	Westling, D. L., & Cooper-Duffy, K.	2003			x																
The Teacher Support Program: A Proposed Resource for the Special Education Profession and an Initial Validation.	Westling, D. L., Herzog, M. J., & Cooper-Duffy, K.	2006	x							x											
Supporting beginning special education teachers.	Whitaker, S. D.	2001			x	x															
Mentoring beginning special education teachers and the relationship to attrition.	Whitaker, S. D.	2000			x	x															

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Article	Authors	Year	Introduction/Context	New special education teachers	Changing Employee Landscape	Retention	Mentoring Programs	Professional Development	Training-College Programs	Training-Professional Standards	Training after Employment-Onboarding	Training after Employment-Induction	Training After Employment -Ongoing	Training Topic-Cultural Awareness	Training Topic-HLP Assessment	Training Topic -HLP Collaboration	Training Topic -HLP Instruction	Training Topic- HLP Social/EmoBeh	Training Topic- Legal Obligations	Training Topics-District Procedures	Training Topic-Stress M...
Ensuring Excellence in the Preparation of Special Educators through Professional Program Evaluation.	Wilcox, D. J., Putnam, J., & Wigle, S. E.	2002						x													
Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Standards: Their Importance and Ease of Implementation.	Zionts, L. T., Shellady, S. M., & Zionts, P.	2006							x						x						

APPENDIX B

Potential Participant Email Request

Dear Special Educator,

You are invited to participate in a brief five-minute research survey to investigate and understand the impact of professional development on the retention experience of special educators. There is also a follow up interview for those interested in providing more information regarding special education professional development areas. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from any portion of the study at any time without consequences. Your survey responses will be anonymous and will be used to influence decision making and research in the field of special education.

Please, consider participating in this study.

Interested parents should email at [redacted] by: _____.

Thank you for your consideration.

Special Education Director
Participating School District

Participation Request Letter

STUDY: High Leverage Professional Development Topics that Support the Retention of Special Educators

June___, 2022

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

You are invited to participate in a mixed method study to investigate and understand the impact of professional development on the retention experience of special educators. The main investigator of this study is Meggan Lokken, Doctoral Candidate in UMass Global University's Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were chosen to participate in this study because you a special educator in the five districts sampled in San Diego County, California.

Voluntary Participation Part I:

You will be asked to complete 22 brief questions using a scale of 1–4 to rate the importance of different types of professional development topics. There are no right or wrong answers. Different people will find certain topics more important than others in helping them to maintain longer in the profession. The Google Forms survey is estimated to take five minutes. At the end of the survey, participants will be asked if they are willing to participate in a 30 minute follow up interview. Participants can select "No, thank you. This is not something I'm interested in doing at this time" or "Maybe, please send me more information so I can determine if this is something I want to do." Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from any portion of the study at any time without consequences.

Voluntary Participation Part II

The researcher will review the surveys and provide additional information via email to participants who (1) completed all 22 survey questions and (2) indicated "Maybe, please send me more information so I can determine if this is something I want to do." These individuals will be provided two documents, including the written interview questions to preview and a copy of an audio recording consent form that will allow for the transcription and coding of the participants interview. The purpose of the interview is to seek more information regarding each special educator's professional development experience across a variety of topics. Once the consent form are received, the researcher will select 10 individuals to conduct a standardized interview over Zoom. Ideally, two individuals are selected from each participating district. Participation in the interview will last about 30 minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from any portion of the study at any time without consequences.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to determine how experienced special education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school grade level ranges rate the importance of professional development topics identified as high

leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center at helping them perform their teaching jobs and to determine how the ratings of the different groups compare to one another. A second purpose was to describe the impact these professional development topics identified as high leverage practices in special education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center have on experienced special education teachers' in the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school grade level ranges decision to remain in the profession and how the descriptions of the different groups compare to one another.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in the study, then you may proceed with participating in the interview. The researcher will contact those interested participants to schedule an interview. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to understand the experiences and barriers of special educators.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient to spend up to five minutes completing the electronic survey, though participants will have a two-week period to complete the survey. Additionally, if selected for a follow-up interview, it will take an additional 30 minutes to complete the interview. The interview session will be held at an agreed upon time and virtually, to minimize inconvenience to participants.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation, however, your input and feedback could help add to the research regarding factors that may contribute to the professional development and retention of special educators. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. Additionally, the findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

ANONYMITY: Records of information that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact me at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. Phil Pendley by email at ppendley@mail.UMass Global.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

Meggan Lokken
Doctoral Candidate, UMass Global University

Informed Consent Document

UMASS GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD

IRVINE, CA 92618

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: High Leverage Professional Development Topics that Support the Retention of Special Educators

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Meggan Lokken, Doctoral Candidate

TITLE OF CONSENT FORM: Consent to Participate in Research

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at UMass Global University. You are invited to participate in a mixed method study to investigate and understand the impact of professional development on the retention experience of special educators.

PROCEDURES: In participating in this research study, I agree to complete a brief electronic survey. I also have the option to additional participate in a virtual audio-recorded semi-structured interview. The interview will take place using Zoom, at a predetermined time and will last approximately thirty minutes.
I understand that:

a) The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to twenty minutes in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at an agreed upon time, to minimize this inconvenience.

b) I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The possible benefit of this study is to add to the research regarding the retention of special educators. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Meggan Lokken, UMass Global University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Mrs. Lokken may be contacted by phone at [redacted] or email at [redacted] Global.edu. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Phil Pendley at ppendley@mail.UMass Global.edu.

d) I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) The study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. Audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of three years by the investigator in a secure location.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed, and my consent re-obtained. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button indicates that you have read the informed consent form and the information in this document and that you voluntarily agree to participate. If you do not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate.

□ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

□ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey

APPENDIX D

Audio Release Form

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: High Leverage Professional Development Topics that
Support the Retention of Special Educators

UMASS GLOBAL UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

I authorize Meggan Lokken, UMass Global University Doctoral Candidate, to record my
voice. I give UMass Global University and all persons or entities associated with this
research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with
this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the
information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or
presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those
listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising
correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the
above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release all claims against any
person or organization utilizing this material.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

Participant's Bill of Rights

UMASS GLOBAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

UMass Global IRB   Adopted 2021

Demographic Information and Participant Survey

This is a survey to better understand you and your professional development and training experiences as a special educator. Your input is valued and appreciated. The information you provide will remain confidential.

Research Questionnaire

mmlokken@gmail.com (not shared) Switch account

* Required

What is the current grade level you predominately work with? *

○ Preschool-aged

○ Elementary

○ Middle School

○ High School

Which category below best describes your experience as a special educator? *

○ Intern Level Special Educator

○ Year 1 or 2 Special Educator

○ Special Educator with 3+ years of experience

Next   Clear form

APPENDIX G

Interview Questions/ Protocol

Interviewer: Meggan Lokken
Interview time planned: Approximately 30 minutes
Recording: Zoom recordings
Written: Field notes
Introductions: Introduce ourselves to one another

Opening Statement: Thank you for agreeing to spend time with me today. My name is Meggan Lokken and I am a doctoral candidate at UMass Global University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I am also the Director of Special Education in the Escondido Union School District. I am passionate about creating meaningful outcomes for our students with disabilities and know that our special educators play a critical role in realizing these outcomes.

Given the current state of our post-Covid educational landscape and with a known national staffing shortage of special educators, I wanted to learn how our school systems could do better to understand the perspectives and mitigate barriers for our special educators. This led me to research in exploring which high leverage professional development topics will make sense for school district to prioritize to help retain their special educators.

Interview Agenda: I anticipate that this interview will take about 30 minutes today. As a review of the process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via an email. Prior to this interview, you signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for this study. You also read the Letter of Invitation and the Participant's Bill of Rights. Thank you for signing the Audio Release Form in advance of this interview. Next, I will begin recording on Zoom and I will only continue with the audio recording of the interview. Finally, I will stop the recording and conclude our interview session. Please remember that anytime during this process you have the right to stop the interview. If at any time you do not understand the questions being asked, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin with the interview? I will be conducting approximately 10 interviews with others like yourself who are special educators. To ensure the data collected is pure, I may not engage in a lot of dialogue with you during the interview.

Interview Questions

1. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *collaborating with families and professionals* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
2. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *organizing and facilitating effective meetings* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?

3. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *using multiple sources of data* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
4. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *interpreting and communicating assessment results* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
5. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *using data to develop IEPs* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
6. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *using data to adjust instruction* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
7. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *establishing effective learning environments* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
8. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *providing student feedback* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
9. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *assessing and teaching social behaviors* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
10. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *developing learning goals and associated instructional plans* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
11. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *use of scaffolding and curriculum adaptation* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
12. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *use of assistive and instructional technologies* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
13. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *intensive instruction and flexible grouping* on your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
14. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *engagement strategies* your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
15. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *metacognitive strategies* your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
16. How do you describe the impact of your professional development regarding *generalization strategies* your decision to remain in the special education teaching profession?
17. Lastly, what are any prior professional development topics that have helped you remain in the special education teacher profession?

Qualitative Interview Question Development Matrix

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Source
RQ3 - How do experienced Special Education teachers in the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school grade level ranges describe the impact of Professional Development topics identified as High Leverage Practices in Special Education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center on their decision to remain in the profession?	IQ3 – How do you describe the impact of the following Collaboration Professional Development topics on your decision to remain in the Special Education teaching profession? 1. collaborating with families and professionals; 2. organizing and facilitating effective meetings. IQ3 – How do you describe the impact of the following Assessment Professional Development topics on your decision to remain in the Special Education teaching profession? 3. using multiple sources of data; 4. interpreting and communicating assessment results; 5. using data to develop IEPs; 6. using data to adjust instruction. IQ3 – How do you describe the impact of the following Social/Emotional/Behavioral Professional Development topics on your decision to remain in the Special Education teaching profession? 7. establishing effective learning environments; 8. providing feedback; 9. assessing and teaching social behaviors. IQ3 – How do you describe the impact of the following Instructional Professional Development topics on your decision to remain in the Special Education teaching profession? 10. Developing learning goals and associated instructional plans;	Source 1 - High Leverage Practices in Special Education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center HLP 1-3 Source 2 – High Leverage Practices in Special Education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center HLP 4-6 Source 3 – High Leverage Practices in Special Education by Council for Exceptional Children and CEEDAR Center HLP 7-10 Source 4 – High Leverage Practices in Special Education by Council for Exceptional Children

	11. Use of scaffolding and curriculum adaptation; 12. Use of assistive and instructional technologies; 13. Providing intensive instruction and using flexible grouping; 14. Using engagement strategies; 15. Teaching metacognitive strategies; 16. Generalization in learning; 17. Using feedback.	and CEEDAR Center HLP 11-22

APPENDIX I

UMass Global Institutional Review Board Approval

Dear Meggan Lokken,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at IRB.umassglobal.edu

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

IRB
Academic Affairs
UMass Global
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618
irb@umassglobal.edu
www.umassglobal.edu

National Institute of Health Clearance

Completion Date	24-May-2020
Expiration Date	N/A
Record ID	36744950

This is to certify that:

Meggan Lokken

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Human Subjects Research (Curriculum Group)
Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Brandman University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wfe8a1a44-bd58-4e5c-bde0-162d28a29a42-36744950

Quantitative Survey

Your Professional Development Experiences with High Leverage Practices (HLP) in Special Education:

For the below twenty-two questions, please rate the importance of the HLP professional development topics that have helped you remain in the special education field. There are no right or wrong answers to the below questions. Different people will find certain topics more important than others in helping them to maintain longer in the profession.

1. Collaborate with professionals to increase student success *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

2. Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

3. Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

4. Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

5. Interpret and communicate assessment information with stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

6. Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

7. Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

8. Teachers provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

9. Teach social behaviors *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

10. Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

11. Identify and prioritize long- and short-term learning goals *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

12. Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

13. Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

14. Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

15. Provide scaffolded supports *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

16. Use explicit instruction *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

17. Use flexible grouping *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

18. Use strategies to promote active student engagement *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

19. Use assistive and instructional technologies *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

20. Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

21. Provide intensive instruction *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

22. Teachers provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior *

	1	2	3	4	
Not at all important	○	○	○	○	Extremely important

Finally, would you be willing to participate in a 30 minute follow up interview. Two willing participants will be selected randomly from each district. The purpose of the interview is to seek more information regarding the above topics *

☐ Maybe, please send me more information so I can determine if this is something I want to do.

☐ No, thank you. This is not something I'm interested in doing at this time.

Back   Submit   Clear form