

Fall 10-7-2022

Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policy and Procedure and the Special Education Teachers' Intent

Tara Clark

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), [Other Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#), [Special Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Clark, Tara, "Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policy and Procedure and the Special Education Teachers' Intent" (2022). *Dissertations*. 2059.
<https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations/2059>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact aquilastaff@usm.edu.

Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policy and Procedure and the Special
Education Teachers' Intent

by

Tara Frances Clark

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Education
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Approved by:

Dr. David Lee, Committee Chair

Dr. Lilian Hill

Dr. Thomas Lipscomb

Dr. Peter Paprzycki

Dr. Kyna Shelley

December 2022

COPYRIGHT BY

Tara Frances Clark

2022

Published by the Graduate School



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN
MISSISSIPPI.

ABSTRACT

Teacher shortage has been a growing problem. With the increase of teacher shortages, some areas are being impacted more intensely. Special education is one of the areas most impacted by the shortages. Common reasons exist as to why teachers are leaving the field or profession. These reasons may be personal or professional related. Some of the professional reasons for leaving pertain to the school's administration and the way special education teachers are treated. Principal support is cited as one of the primary indicators of teacher satisfaction. Literature supports the analysis that a principal's leadership heavily determines a teacher's job satisfaction. The theory of planned behavior is used to weigh the teacher's attitude and intention. This paper seeks to determine if there is a correlation between the teacher's attitude towards the principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure and the teacher's intent to stay in the current school or placement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researcher would like to thank the committee chair, Dr. David Lee for the guidance and support throughout this process. Dr. Lee's influence began back in my master's program in 2014 and helped me to follow the intersection of my passions in special education and administration.

I would also like to say a special thank you to Dr. Kyna Shelley for all of her patience, encouragement, and detailed feedback. She has been with me every step of the way and I know without a doubt that I would not have completed this without her.

Special thanks to Dr. Lillian Hill, Dr. Thomas Lipscomb, and Dr. Peter Paprzycki. I sincerely appreciate their feedback and serving on my committee. Their words of wisdom, experience, and encouragement has been priceless.

Thank you to Dr. Myron Labat for encouraging me to start this process many years ago. Half-way through my master's he was already trying to talk me into going forward into the doctoral program. I appreciate him seeing that ability in me and encouraging me to take that plunge.

To the Research Support Center- THANK YOU! Johnathan, Clement, Mitzie, Denise, and Chelsea provided an amazing support network to work through problem areas. When I was stuck and had no clue what to do next, the RSC was a guiding force. You guys are truly amazing!

Finally, thank you to my incredible network of professional contacts who made the research process a bit less painful. Mr. Brian Freeman, Mrs. Gina Gallant, Dr. Lisa Sanders and others have given endless support and for that I am grateful.

DEDICATION

To my family who has stood by me tirelessly for years, thank you. My mom has been a constant source of strength through this process and my entire life. Thank you does not even come close to expressing my deepest gratitude for all she does and all she is. My sisters, Amanda and Casey have also been the best supports anyone would ever want. Many extended family members including my nieces, late grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins have cheered me on all along the way.

Thank you to the friends who have read and reread many drafts of this work and listened to me talk my way through it countless times. I know that Donna and Lora could probably quote parts of this paper as well as I can.

My incredible Jay is the rock and driving force to finish this dream that I started long before him. He has motivated me, loved me, and encouraged me unlike any other. When I lost my way, he became the light. I am eternally grateful to have him beside me. I know he is also grateful that I am finally done, but I am a lifelong learner and I make no promises that I will never enroll in another course or degree.

There is one looking down from heaven who has made his presence very well known. My dad has always been my hero and biggest fan. This research and degree are dedicated to him. He is the reason I love to ask questions and love to learn. We were supposed to start the journey of advanced degrees together, but he went to heaven just before we started. I did it Daddy. I finished what we said we were going to do. I finally did it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION	1
Reasons for Attrition.....	2
Teacher Retention	4
Leadership Focus	4
Statement of Problem.....	6
Purpose Statement.....	7
Research Questions	7
Overarching Research Question.....	7
Supporting Research Question.....	7
Theoretical Framework	7
Justification.....	8
Delimitations of the Study.....	10
Limitations of the Study.....	10
Assumptions	11
CHAPTER II.....	12

Teacher Shortage	12
Special Education Teacher Shortage.....	13
Theoretical Framework	14
Attrition and Retention.....	14
New Teacher Attrition.....	16
Possible Solutions	16
Teacher Focus.....	19
Principal Focus	21
Federal Law	27
Knowledge of Special Education.....	29
Principal Training Programs and Licensure	31
Theoretical Framework Application.....	32
CHAPTER III.....	34
Participants and Sample	34
Instrument.....	34
Design	35
Procedure.....	35
Pilot Study	35
Actual Study	36
Analysis.....	37

CHAPTER IV.....	38
Description of Participants	39
Presentation of Results	39
Supporting Research Question: 1) To what degree do special education teachers believe in the principal’s demonstration of knowledge of special education policy and procedure?.....	40
Supporting Research Question: 2) To what degree do special education teachers report their principal’s behavior exhibits overall support for special education teachers and students?.....	42
Overarching Research Question: 1) To what degree does the special education teacher’s confidence in the principal’s support and knowledge correlate with his/her intent to stay in the current school?.....	44
Analysis of Results.....	46
Chapter Summary	47
CHAPTER V.....	48
Summary of Study Results	48
Discussion of Specific Research Questions.....	49
Discussion of Supporting Research Question: 1) To what degree do special education teachers believe in the principal’s demonstration of knowledge of special education policy and procedure?	49

Discussion of Supporting Research Question: 2) To what degree do special education teachers report their principal’s behavior exhibits overall support for special education teachers and students?	50
Discussion of Overarching Research Question: 1) To what degree does the special education teacher’s confidence in the principal’s support and knowledge correlate with his/her intent to stay in the current school?	51
Conclusion.....	51
Limitations.....	52
Recommendation for Practice.....	52
Recommendation for Future Research	53
APPENDIX A– Permission from Forrest County School District to Conduct Research.	55
APPENDIX B – IRB Approval Letter	56
APPENDIX C – Letter of Consent	57
APPENDIX D - Instrument.....	58
REFERENCES	62

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Supporting Research Question 1 Mean and Standard Deviation	41
Table 2 Supporting Research Question 2 Mean and Standard Deviation	43
Table 3 Overarching Research Question 1 Mean and Standard Deviation	45
Table 4 Pearson Analysis	46
Table 5 Pearson Analysis	46

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Teacher shortages have been a problem for many years in the United States. The Learning Policy Institute reports a high percentage of public-school teachers leaving the profession. In 1992, just over 5% left the profession; in 2005, an increase of 3.4% for a total of 8.4% withdrew from the profession of teaching (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This translates roughly to an increased need of 90,000 new teachers to add to the workforce yearly (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Not only does this cost school districts valuable time in training, but it is also a significant expenditure. The cost of recruitment efforts and training new teachers to the profession or the district puts a heavy financial burden on school districts. The effects of teacher retentions and shortages have far-reaching implications, extending past the walls of the school building into the community and beyond (Billingsley, 2004). Students are the primary focus of every district; conversely, higher teacher turnover comes with a greater negative impact on student growth.

Each year, teachers plan for their employment for the following school year. They may leave the field of education altogether, they may move to a new assignment in the same school or different school, or they remain in their current assignments. In some literature, teacher turnover is divided into three broad categories: leavers- those who leave the profession altogether, movers- those who move to a different school and/or subject area, and stayers- those who remain in the current school and subject area (Kena et al., 2016; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). For the southern part of the United States, teacher attrition is especially a problem. The Learning Policy Institute

(2017) reports “At 16.7% annually, the South has a particularly high turnover rate” (p. 9).

To compound problems, special education teachers in the south are rare commodities, especially when compared to teachers in other subject areas and regions. Prather-Jones (2011) reports that special education teachers are more likely to leave the profession than other subject area teachers. Filling teacher positions is difficult at best, but filling positions in special education has been a large problem in the United States educational system for the last 20 years (Otto & Arnold, 2005; Prather-Jones, 2011).

Reasons for Attrition

Teachers, in general, give many reasons for leaving. Regardless of being classified as movers or leavers, there are several recurring reasons as to why teachers change assignments. Personal and professional causes are cited as reasons for all forms of attrition as well as financial, emotional, physical, and health contributors (Prather-Jones, 2011; Stempien & Loeb, 2002; Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002; Billingsley, 2004. Littrell et al., 1994). Teachers must make tough decisions on what is best for themselves and their personal families regardless of the impact it would have on the students in their classrooms.

Personal reasons are cited in 43% of the attrition cases in the Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond (2017) study and 37% in the Learning Policy (2017) study. These may include movers, in cases such as better paying positions or jobs closer to family, or leavers, for reasons such as family sickness, convenience, etc. Both the Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond (2017) and Learning Policy (2017) studies confirm that less than half

of those that leave do so for personal reasons, thus leaving a significant percentage to be explained. Regardless of the rationale, staff changes are costly for districts.

In the Learning Policy (2017) study, teachers were able to select multiple reasons as to why they were leaving, but it was clear that the primary cause was professionally related. The following is an abbreviated excerpt from the study: dissatisfied with school assessment/accountability policies 25%, dissatisfied with administration 21%, student discipline problems 17%, and lack of autonomy 14%. Prather-Jones (2011) echoed the same findings by citing some of the reasons for attrition as being poor student discipline, lack of collegial respect, lack of administrative and collegial appreciation, and lack of collegial support. These reasons apply to both general and special education teachers but have direct ties to school leadership.

Professional reasons for losing special education teachers in any school or setting can be caused by several primary problems: stress, fatigue, workload, and work environment (Stempien & Loeb, 2002; Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002). To define the work environment more clearly as it pertains to special education teachers, Billingsley (2004) suggests that work environment includes climate, salary, colleague support, paperwork, and caseloads. A 2011 study by Berry et al. shows the top reasons that special education teachers leave: 27% due to retirement or desire to scale back responsibilities; 24% due to burnout, stress, job pressure, lack of support; and 13% desire to change schools or age groups. These numbers are high and reinforce the dire need for administration to be sensitive to unique demands of special education teachers if highly qualified teachers are to be retained.

Teacher Retention

Both the students and the school districts suffer on many fronts when teacher vacancies are not filled with qualified, experienced personnel in a timely manner. In the worst situations, seemingly random people are placed in the classrooms to fill a position and do little to impart knowledge to students (Gersten et al., 2001). The teacher shortage has far-reaching implications in both the school and the community (Billingsley, 2004). Hughes (2015) suggests that teacher attrition has been on the rise since 2010 and is not isolated to the United States. Buchanan (2013) reports that up to one-third of teachers in the United States leave in the first five years of service.

Retaining teachers long enough for them to even reach highly qualified status is a challenge. The period for a new teacher to be considered highly qualified is between three to seven years (Shaw & Newton, 2014; Otto & Arnold, 2005). More special education teachers move to general education positions when compared to the number of general education teachers who convert to special education (Billingsley, 2004; Otto & Arnold, 2005). Gersten et al., (2001) report that the largest problem with special education is not recruitment but retention.

Leadership Focus

The job description of the principal has greatly evolved over the last several years (Neumann-Cieslak, 2011). Principals have a much larger role than that of a strictly managerial position. Principals now act more as instructional leaders than organizational managers (Bellibaş, 2015; Neumann-Cieslak, 2011).

The role of the principal and other school leadership has strong connections to the satisfaction of teachers, which can lead to increased teacher retention (Gersten et al.,

2001; Grobler et al., 2012). Teachers are more productive and engaged when principals spend more time with them (Littrell et al., 1994). These studies support the fact that when teachers felt that they were adequately supported by the administration, they were more positively influenced to remain in a special education position at the current school.

The importance of support that teachers receive from administration is emphasized throughout the literature (Gersten et al., 2001; Littrell et al., 1994; Otto & Arnold, 2005; Shaw & Newton, 2014). Principals provide emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support (Hughes, 2015; Littrell & et al., 1994). Support directly influences autonomy, professional development, and satisfaction which can be positive or negative (Gersten et al., 2001). Lack of administrative support is cited as the main cause that one-third of all teachers are leaving or have left the profession (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

With the growing changes in administration, special education has become more burdensome to principals (Neumann-Cieslak, 2011). Special education teachers require distinct types of support than general education teachers because of the many dimensions involved in teaching special education and the complexity the job involves (Hughes, 2015). While principals are providing some degree of support, special education teachers do not find the support helpful because it is not in the specific areas of their need (Littrell et al., 1994). This often comes from a lack of an administration's experience and knowledge in the demands of special education (Otto & Arnold, 2005).

Because of this lack of knowledge, most principals reported having additional support personnel that assisted in making decisions for special education (Frost & Kersten, 2011). While principals like this practice, it contradicts the role of the principal

as instructional leader and often causes special education teachers to be less engaged with the teachers in the classrooms. Principals who hold a special education certification say that they are more active in special education instruction and think they are better prepared (Frost & Kersten, 2011). Principals must be trained and become more knowledgeable in special education to be able to adequately support teachers and students so that students can grow academically, and the school will benefit from the consistency of returning teachers (Otto & Arnold, 2005).

Statement of Problem

Much research exists in the field of education concerning teacher attrition, retention, and the causes of attrition and retention. Research has indicated not only the many factors that may lead to attrition but also those factors that may serve to improve retention, such as increasing principal support and improving the work environment. It is common, however, for many studies to point directly to the principal's role as leader of the organization to provide quality leadership based on knowledge and experience in special education which can be a powerful tool in retaining teachers. Some studies point to the role of the principal as instructional leader to be the major contributor in teacher's departure. Research also shows that principals who spend less time with teachers and do not provide emotional support may experience higher teacher attrition than those who do. However, when the scope is narrowed to special education teachers, other factors emerge indicating many special education teachers are dissatisfied. While it is known that dissatisfaction results in high rates of departure and directly relates to the quality of principal support, no known research has attempted to define principal support in terms

of principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure and determining whether this knowledge is a primary contributing factor of teacher retention.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible relationship between a principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure and special education teacher attrition. Specifically, this study will assess the degree to which teachers' perceptions of a principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedures relate to the teacher's intent to remain in the current educational setting. Research will be based on the teacher's perceptions of the current administration and plans for the following school year.

Research Questions

Overarching Research Question

To what degree does the special education teacher's confidence in the principal's support and knowledge correlate with his/her intent to stay in the current school?

Supporting Research Question

- 1- To what degree do special education teachers believe a principal's behavior demonstrates knowledge of special education policy and procedure?
- 2-To what degree do special education teachers report their principal's behavior exhibits overall support for special education teachers and students?

Theoretical Framework

The theory of planned behavior states that an individual's intention is driven by his or her attitudes towards the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In this study, the theory of planned behavior is applied to the teacher's attitude toward the principal's behavior

demonstrating knowledge of special education policy and procedure. According to this theory, the teacher's intent to stay in the current school and position will correlate with his/her attitude towards the principal's behavior.

Justification

To discover why so many special education teachers exit the profession or subject area, research should be conducted to determine if increased principal knowledge might lead to more adequate support to special education teachers. This might aid in retaining highly qualified and much needed professionals in the specific area of special education. Both the study and the results have the potential to positively benefit the participant, administration, and the larger scope of education.

Participants stand to benefit from participation in the questionnaire portion of the study. The questionnaire may cause the participants to reflect on his/her individual career and choices he/she has made or will make soon. The participant's reflection may reveal if he/she soon plans to leave the current teaching position, why there is a plan to leave, and what other alternatives are possible. Participants may evaluate the situation and see a different outcome.

Administration also stands to benefit from this study. Both the study itself and the results could provide additional insight as to why there are many special education teachers leaving the profession. This study will provide insight into what can be done to promote retention from the administrators' point of view. School Administrators have the most to gain since the largest portion of the study is based on what they know about special education policy and procedure.

Beyond the direct participant and administration benefits, school districts may benefit from the ability to use the basis of this study to gauge the departure of special education teachers as a measurement for the knowledge of administration. This study may provide district level administration with the insight necessary to improve the professional development and training school level administrators receive in special education, therefore, reducing the turnover of teachers.

Looking to the larger scope of state and national education institutions, this study may assist in the informed decision making of administration training programs. Colleges and universities may revise administrator preparation programs to increase or decrease the amount of coursework necessary for administration licensure. Also, the hiring process of administration may be changed to include components specific to addressing the problem of special education teacher turnover and how to resolve it.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following words will be used with the meanings discussed below:

504 plan: outlined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a plan for students with documented disabilities to receive accommodation in the classroom

Confidence: trust in the administration of the school has adequate proficiency in necessary skills and knowledge to be successful school leaders

Intent: a projected plan to stay in the current school in the current assignment assuming that a contract is offered by the district

General education: courses and curricula taught to the general population of students either without documented educational disabilities or in a mixed setting with the majority being without documented educational disabilities

IDEA: (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) the federal law which requires all public schools to provide services for students with disabilities

Inclusion: courses in which students with documented educational disabilities participate in general education courses with the assistance of a teacher who is certified to provide services to these students

Self-contained: a class specific to special education students; only students with documented educational disabilities are enrolled in these courses; they may be taught on grade level or functional level depending on the severity of the disability

Setting: either school or assigned position

Special education: courses and curricula taught to students with documented educational disabilities; students may be mixed with general education students or in classes with whom all students have documented educational disabilities.

Delimitations of the Study

Study delimiting factors are specific. The major factors are teachers who are currently teaching special education or teachers who have taught special education in the last 5 years. Participants in this study are delimited to special education teachers in the United States.

Limitations of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed education around the world. Teacher shortages have increased. A limitation of this study is the impact of the COVID-

19 pandemic. Another limitation is location. Teachers from the United States will be targeted on social media. Geographic locations in the United States or globally may change the results.

Assumptions

It is assumed that all special education teachers will answer questions honestly. Another assumption is that the instrument will be effective in measuring the variables. It is also assumed that the researcher will reach an acceptable number of potential participants through the social media channels.

CHAPTER II

Teacher Shortage

Teacher shortages have been on the rise in the United States. Not only is this a problem in the United States, but this trend has also been rising internationally since 2010 (Huges, 2015). The annual attrition rate in the US is 8%, which is twice as high as other high-achieving nations (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). The teacher shortage is a severe problem that impacts more than just teachers.

The teacher shortage has far-reaching implications in both the school and the community (Billingsley, 2004). The shortage can be caused by those moving to a different school or subject area, or those leaving the profession altogether (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kena et al., 2016). Attrition rates of transfers alone can cost more than \$20,000 per teacher in urban districts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). When the teacher turnover begins to impact district finances, districts can expect to see repercussions in the classroom.

Attrition occurs for multiple reasons across multiple disciplines. Within the first five years of service, nearly one-third of teachers leave the profession in the US, Australia, and other developed countries while citing burnout as the primary cause (Buchanan et al., 2013). Teachers who think they are less qualified are 2 to 3 times more likely to leave the profession. Teachers who entered the teaching field with an alternate route certification was 25% more likely to leave as compared to those who hold a standard teaching license (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Special Education Teacher Shortage

Finding teachers for areas like special education, math, and foreign languages are often more difficult than in other subject areas. When teacher shortages are considered, these areas are often impacted more intensely. One study reports that math, science, special education, and foreign language teachers are most likely to leave (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), while other studies show special education teachers are more likely to leave than teachers of any other subject area and or grade level (Albrecht et al., 2013). The lack of special education teachers is a massive problem (Peterson, 2013; Pierce, 2014; Prather-Jones, 2011; Stempien & Loeb, 2002) with the trend being on the rise for the last twenty years (Prather-Jones, 2011).

When compared to elementary teachers, special education teachers have a 46% higher rate of leaving the profession, and only 8% leave for another school setting (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Billingsley (2004) found that more special education teachers leave to work in the general education setting than general education teachers converting to special education. Only one-third of these teachers leave due to retirement, leaving two-thirds parting for other reasons (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

While the number of teachers decreases, the ratio of students eligible for special services and teacher units increases (Prather-Jones, 2011). This increase places a heavy burden on an already taxed system. Within the realm of special education, several specialties exist and pose an even more significant challenge. Teachers with a specialty (hearing, vision, autism, emotional and behavioral, and others) are the hardest positions to fill (Berry et al., 2011) particularly in rural districts (Berry et al., 2011). Aside from

those leaving, another major challenge in education is recruiting and retaining qualified special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The theory of planned behavior has roots in the theory of reasoned action (Teh Raihana Nazirah Roslan, 2021). Both theories propose that an individual's intentions are driven by his/her attitude towards a behavior. The theory of planned behavior adds the element of "perceived behavioral control" (Teh Raihana Nazirah Roslan, 2021). The theory states that perceived control is equal to the locus of control in a situation where there is no other choice meaning that the behavior is performed based off intention with an uncontrolled variable (Ajzen, 1991).

Attrition and Retention

Multiple studies have been conducted to determine the reasons teachers leave the profession or school. One of the most significant complaints from teachers indicates the level of stress (Pedota, 2015; Stempien & Loeb, 2002), coupled with job dissatisfactions, is the main cause for the decision to leave (Pierce, 2014; Stempien & Loeb, 2002). The overwhelming amount of psychological and emotional stress resulting from the lack of support and resources is a significant contributing factor to attrition (Peterson, 2013).

Typical factors revealed in the literature for attrition or retention included assorted reasons such as personal illness, relocation, job dissatisfaction, etc., that when combined into like categories, seemed to repeat. Categories can be divided into themes. The most common reason for attrition was stated as a lack of support, both formal and informal (Hughes, 2015; Billingsley, 2004) and work conditions in the school (Albrecht et al., 2013). These themes and factors are multiplied when applied to the specialty of special

education. Personal factors, including salary, play a role in the decision to leave as well (Billingsley, 2004).

Support is a prevalent theme throughout the literature and will be discussed in greater detail later. Both administrative and colleague support is vital (Billingsley, 2004). Specifically, the support from leadership that teachers receive is a critical aspect of the decision to leave or stay (Albrecht et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). The administration's limited capacity to provide instructional leadership influenced many teachers to leave (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Otto & Arnold, 2005). With a teacher shortage, the administration gets frustrated, beginning and perpetuating a cycle that increases attrition (Berry et al., 2011).

Work conditions are a recurring theme in causes of attrition. These conditions can be expanded to include school climate (Billingsley, 2004; Albrecht et al., 2013), managing expectations, school culture adjustment, figuring out relationships, and adjusting to the demands and pace of the day (Buchanan et al., 2013). Other conditions contributing to departure are lack of relevant professional development, adequate facilities, useful teaching resources, parental involvement, time for collaboration and planning, collegial relationships, and decision-making power (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Otto & Arnold (2005) found student discipline, problems with parents, and lack of materials were the top specific causes.

Special education is a specific area inside of the realm of education, so factors exist which are specific to only that area. Some of these factors contribute to the decision to leave. These factors include workload/caseload volume and complexity (Albrecht et al., 2013; Billingsley, 2004) and the amount of paperwork (Billingsley, 2004). With

special education relying heavily on different services, such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, specialized transportation, and others, budget constraints are also a factor (Peterson, 2013). New and ever-changing policies about special education are also contributing to the increased stresses and shortages of teachers (Smith et al., 2010). The 2011 study of Berry et al. revealed that one-third of the teachers in this study reported that they had no intention of remaining in special education because of the difficulties in the job.

New Teacher Attrition

Teachers with less than five years' experience are the most likely to leave the profession or school because, typically, they are given the hardest assignments. Teachers with fewer years' experience seem to have a lower satisfaction rate than those with more experience (Pierce, 2014). New teachers tend to have a harder time adjusting to their careers (Youngs, Hyun-Seung, & Pogodzinski, 2015). On average, it takes 3-7 years for a new teacher in general to be considered highly qualified (Shaw & Newton, 2014). Large numbers of new special education teachers are leaving their profession or swapping areas to teach in a general education setting (Otto & Arnold, 2005). The largest group leaving, or swapping is female, under 35 years old, and having less than five years' experience (Otto & Arnold, 2005).

Possible Solutions

Several potential programs and solutions have been studied to help curb the attrition and retention rates of both special education and general education teachers. Some of these solutions include: professional development, internal/external supports, and mentors; however, these strategies will not apply to all teachers (Buchanan et al.,

2013). Pierce (2014) expands the thought by adding four factors for improving attrition is as follows: reducing stress, the need for more specific understanding of the duties of special attention teachers, fostering collegial relationships, and fostering creativity. Other suggestions to help with teacher attrition are mentioned throughout the literature. Induction and mentoring programs, being included on a team, developing positive relationships with administrators and colleagues, and support networks may help according to a study by Albrecht et al. (2013). Providing better teacher preparation programs, more customized mentoring programs, and better administration training all promote a teacher's willingness to stay (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004).

Support is imperative in the early years of a teacher's career so that he or she will remain in the profession. Successful induction programs are long-term and go beyond the first year of employment (Billingsley et al., 2004). Mentoring, induction programs, and professional development have a substantial influence on a special education teacher's intent to remain in teaching (Billingsley, 2004). New special education teachers are given support through formal and informal means (Griffin, 2010). Formal support may include scheduled meetings, observations, and assigning mentors. The formal induction programs increased a new teacher's optimism about remaining in the profession because the support was more tailored to his/her unique needs. Teachers cite formal and scheduled observations of an experienced teacher, or observations with feedback by an administrator or mentor, as helpful tools during the induction process. Administrators use various tools to help alleviate the lack of a teacher's training such as professional development and encouraging collaboration (Berry et al., 2011). Informal support may include unannounced visits, handwritten notes, and unscheduled meetings. These

supports are often viewed as helpful because they occur in a more relaxed and friendly environment. The most beneficial support was informal and unscheduled meetings with a mentor. The second most beneficial support was scheduled meetings with mentors or administrators. These two supports yielded more teachers who were satisfied with the mentoring process (Griffin, 2010).

The system of supports is designed to build confidence, and self-efficacy as a key to overcoming the hardships. Student success helps to build both confidence and self-efficacy. Pedota (2015) outlines ten strategies to promote self-efficacy and student success as a means of retaining teachers. Many of the strategies on which Pedota focused are related to student learning, but some strategies highlight the importance of communication between teachers, students, parents, and administration. Support from all angles is important in student success which leads to higher rates of teacher retention.

There is a greater number of special education teachers leaving the classroom every year than general education teachers. Poor working conditions are the largest contributing factors (Otto & Arnold, 2005). Gersten et al. (2001) discuss the major problem with special education teacher shortages by explaining that the problem is not recruiting but retaining. The Berry et al. (2011) study shows that teachers would like more training in disabilities and supports outside of their training and additional help for recurring and severe student behavior problems. The biggest issue in special education is keeping qualified teachers. Many teachers are just there to fill the gap and do little by way of educating the students (Gersten et al.,2001).

Teacher Focus

The school environment and culture matter in the longevity of the career of the teacher in the field and at the school (Billingsley, 2004). The most critical factors noted are school leadership, collegial relationships, and school culture (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Other factors for high rates of special education teacher attrition include certification, academic ability, degrees earned, and teacher preparation. These were examined but little information can be drawn from this data (Billingsley, 2004).

The need for teachers in general is exceptionally high. Because of the desperate need for teachers, those who are less qualified are often hired (Berry et al., 2011). Looking at the entire person as opposed to only teacher preparation programs will help determine the specific path for retention (Pedota, 2015). Both general and special education teachers must be well versed in pedagogy and content as well as the ability to individualize the curriculum and improve academic growth (Smith et al., 2010).

Special education teachers have the same problems as general education teachers including “curriculum and instructional issues, work conditions, ambiguous roles, finding materials, addressing students’ problem behaviors, time and organizational issues, collaboration, stress, and instructional management concerns” (Billingsley et al., 2004, p.335).

The more positive experiences that were associated with supportive and understanding mentors increases the belief of being valued and supported (Buchanan et al., 2013).

The supports that special education teachers need also differ from those of general education teachers. Special education teachers need an environment that is highly conducive to collaboration (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Special education teachers enter the school setting with a distinct set of standards for their students, so a supportive climate is imperative for the system to work (Correa & Wagner, 2011).

Many special education teachers express dissatisfaction in their careers. The teachers' stress is harmful to both students and themselves and the stress can cause teachers to end up leaving. The report suggests that it could be because of the complexity and intensity of work (Hughes, 2015).

Many of the legal requirements are left up to the teachers to fulfil which causes added stress (Peterson, 2013). Pierce (2014) suggested that the reason for dissatisfaction is that special education teachers attempt to be superheroes because of cultural expectations. Special education teachers reported being highly frustrated which causes withdrawal from job involvement and commitment or intense focus causing personal life to suffer.

Special education can be defined as specially designed instruction where the needs of the student's specific disability are addressed so that he/she can participate and access the general curriculum to meet educational standards of general education students to the best of his/her ability (Bays, 2007). Path analysis was conducted to determine factors leading to higher commitment. Districts should stress the importance of job assignments to retain special education teachers (Gersten et al., 2001).

Special education teachers have licenses and are considered specialists in providing individualized instruction for students with disabilities. To be "highly

qualified,” special education teachers are also required to be content proficient. In addition to content, these teachers must be well versed in the laws, policies, and procedures for implementing IDEA (Bays, 2007). Teachers reported that the diversity in the disability types and ability levels in which they serve proved to be exceptionally difficult, especially in rural schools (Berry et al., 2011). Emotional and behavior specialties are the hardest to fill and maintain (Prather-Jones, 2011).

Principal Focus

States require principals to work with teachers to implement practices that are most conducive to student needs (Bellibaş, 2015). Because of a principal’s role, they are also typically the one who determines class size, nonteaching assignments, and student class assignments. Other jobs a principal may have regarding a special education teacher include “disciplining students, hiring and firing personnel, advocating for students and parents, and supervising school faculty and staff” (Correa & Wagner, 2011, p 16). Additional responsibilities of the principal includes promoting a favorable school climate with all stakeholders including students with disabilities (Correa & Wagner, 2011).

Constant communication is also a necessity (Albrecht et al., 2013). Teachers are more productive and stimulated when principals spend more time with teachers (Littrell et al., 1994). Special education teachers who enjoyed good relationships with the administration had a more positive outlook on their positions (Griffin, 2010). Principals who take responsibility to assist with discipline also increased teacher satisfaction (Youngs, Hyun-Seung, & Pogodzinski, 2015).

Principals are expected to act as implementors and supporters for mentoring programs for new special education programs (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Even with the

lack of training, principals are actively involved in “(a) special education department meetings, (b) individualized education plan (IEP) meetings, (c) special education teacher observations, and (d) review of special education lesson plans” (Lynch, 2012, p. 41).

With all the leadership theories and models, the correlation of leadership theories and student achievement data has not been examined, but the process of leadership approaches has been studied. Each of the popular theories has a purpose, but the use of evidence-based leadership practices should be linked with student outcomes to ascertain which interventions are most effective (Boscardin, 2007).

The Boscardin (2007) study also showed that Laissez Fair and Extra Effort leaders significantly impacted employees’ performance. Public secondary teachers consistently post lower academic test scores than private secondary teachers seemingly because the administration has more authority (Munir & Khalil, 2016).

Another theory of leadership that involves a more democratic approach is servant leadership. Elements of servant leadership were defined as: love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. The study found a positive correlation between perceptions of servant leadership and a teacher’s job satisfaction. Another possible implication of this study is that principals who see themselves as dictators might re-evaluate their methods and adopt those that are more conducive to an environment that is more supportive of teachers (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

Most principals reported having additional support personnel that assisted in making decisions for special education. While the principals like this practice, it contradicts the role of the principal as an instructional leader and often caused less engagement with special education teachers (Frost & Kersten, 2011). Today’s principals

have seven key characteristics: manager of personnel, manager of students, to influence state and community politics, manager of external development, manager of finances, long-range planner, and manager of academic performance and instruction (Lynch, 2012).

Findings concluded that key components from administrative support include discipline, respect, and appreciation, and influencing collegial support (Prather-Jones, 2011). Often, external issues hinder administrators from being able to ensure that adequate special education services are being provided. Principals are expected to be involved in this process. The literature lacks explanations of how this happens on a day-to-day basis (Bays, 2007).

The most successful principals set sights on academic goals as opposed to organizational duties. These principals act more as an instructional leader than a manager (Bellibaş, 2015). Many studies have found that leaders are more concerned with management as opposed to instructional leadership. Principals cited that large schools and limited financial resources made it difficult to focus on academics as opposed to management since they were responsible for the monetary success of the school as well (Bellibaş, 2015). The role of the principal as instructional leader is of absolute importance, and teachers' perceptions of a strong instructional leader shape the outcome of classroom successes (Bellibaş, 2015). While psychological support is essential, instructional support is also necessary. Instructional support may be provided by mentoring, meetings that are specifically designed for new teachers, professional development, or observations. Flexibility is key (Billingsley et al., 2004).

An imperative shift is the view of the principal as an instructional leader versus the old title of manager. The leadership that principals provide is a crucial element to a teacher's success and in meeting a student's diverse needs which results in promoting the educational process. Professional development from the instructional leader and getting timely and constructive feedback is also particularly important (Correa & Wagner, 2011).

Instructional leadership, data-driven instruction, and inclusion are ideas that have been brought to the forefront (McHatton et al., 2010). Principals have the second most important job in the school. They are responsible for modeling expectations (both legal and ethical) as well as providing superior knowledge and supervision (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Strong or over-bearing leadership at the beginning of the career will encourage a new teacher or cause him/her to be tempted to move or leave his or her career field. Also, principals that served as instructional leaders created a stronger relationship with novice teachers which promoted student achievement and encouraged teachers to deepen content knowledge. (Youngs et al., 2015)

Principals are imperative to ensuring that special education students receive necessary services and effective instruction. The principal's primary duties are to "carry out their tasks and engage with others in a) pursuing and instructional vision; b) cultivating norms of trust, collaboration, and academic press; c) supporting teachers; and d) monitoring instruction and innovation" (Bays, 2007, p.144). With this, the principal's goals should be to enhance and ensure that students with special needs are on target for success (Bays, 2007). A study by Albrecht et al. in 2013 found "administrative support and the availability of that support on a daily basis were cited as significant factors in a

teacher's satisfaction with the current job setting" (p. 1017). Indicators of support may include classroom provisions, time for paperwork and preparation, availability of support personnel, and opportunities for effective professional development. (Albrecht et al., 2013)

Billingsley et al. (2004) reviewed multiple studies of the intentions of special education teachers. They discovered that half of all teachers intend on teaching in special education until retirement which contradicts another study which examined intention (Billingsley et al., 2004). Billingsley et al. (2004) go on to say, "Interestingly, neither the overall helpfulness of induction support nor the helpfulness of formal mentoring was significantly correlated with the respondent's intention to stay in special education" (p. 345). Supportive administration can increase a teacher's positive outlook and the likelihood of remaining in the field and offset the stresses of a cumbersome workload. A working definition of support is necessary to determine what makes it so viable (Cancio et al., 2013). The research states, "When teachers strongly disagree that their administration is supportive, they are more than twice as likely to move schools or leave teaching than when they strongly agree that their administration is supportive" (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 29).

One study examined the support of principals and teachers. Results showed a strong direct effect on satisfaction and the decision to stay or leave the field. Support directly affects dissonance, professional development, and satisfaction (Gersten et al., 2001). Research by Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein (2004) states, "Beginning teachers are more likely to receive informal support from colleagues more often than other forms of support and are more likely to find this support helpful" (p. 343).

Principals are responsible for providing a range of support for teachers. Principals provide emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support. The Littrell et al. (1994) study confirmed that a principal's support is vital to a teacher's well-being. Principals that provide the most support have higher rates of satisfied teachers. Emotional and instrumental support played a large part in school commitment and physical, emotional, and psychological health (Littrell et al., 1994). House (as cited in Cancio et al., 2013) goes into detail about the various levels of support:

“Emotional support: Administrators show teachers that they are respected, trusted professionals, and worthy of concern by maintaining open communication, showing appreciation, taking an interest in teachers' work, and considering teacher recommendations.

Instrumental support: Administrators directly assist teachers with work-related tasks, such as providing necessary materials, space, and resources, ensuring adequate time for teaching and nonteaching duties, assisting teachers with parental difficulties, helping with managerial-type concerns, developing forums to support the day-to-day frustration of a teacher of students with EBD and providing flexibility for consultation time.

Informational support: Administrators provide teachers with information that they can use to improve classroom practices. For example, administrators provide opportunities for teachers to attend staff development, offer practical information about effective teaching strategies, and provide suggestions to improve instruction, classroom management skills and strategies to identify signs of stress and burnout and strategies to alleviate these stressors.

Appraisal support: Administrators are responsible for providing ongoing personnel appraisals, such as frequent and constructive feedback about their performance, information about what constitutes effective teaching, and clear guidelines regarding job responsibilities.” (p. 73-74)

Administrative support is an incentive. Lack of support is a cause to leave.

Support was cited as lacking in areas like availability of time to complete paperwork, collaborate, plan, in-service opportunities, large caseloads, and lack of technology/materials (Otto & Arnold, 2005). Some contributing factors to the feeling of lack of support include belief that they are ill-prepared for assigned tasks, limited resources, bad or negative working conditions, undesirable teacher assignments, and overwhelming workloads (Peterson, 2013). Studies show that the perceptions of support from administration highly influence the decision to leave (Prather-Jones, 2011). Lack of administrative support is cited as the main cause as to why one-third of all teachers are leaving or have left the profession (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

Federal Law

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has promoted more involvement of the general education teachers in the assessment and progress monitoring role of students with disabilities. Administrators are to be mindful of problematic areas and assist with progress monitoring to define and address systemic problems. Principals should be continuously watching data to determine the effectiveness and integrity of the instruction and interventions (Boscardin, 2007). No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and IDEA changed the principal’s role as an instructional leader as opposed to that of a manager (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). An assessment-based

system of students' proficiency on standardized tests means that principals rely heavily on all students' performance, which includes those with disabilities. Beyond the active teacher in the classroom, the principal is an incredibly powerful factor which impacts students' performance. Students are expected to obtain proficiency on state assessments under the leadership of a principal who pushes for the use of data-driven and researched-based instructional strategies (Lynch, 2012).

NCLB and IDEA introduced high stakes testing and school accountability which required special education students to have “access to the general education curriculum and inclusion in district and state assessments by students with disabilities” (p 2.) Principals must be well versed in special education to meet the new demands of NCLB and IDEA (McHatton et al., 2010). Filling special education teacher vacancies with individuals who are highly qualified has gotten harder since the passage of NCLB (Otto & Arnold, 2005).

NCLB states that all students are to be assessed and meet annual yearly progress (AYP). IDEA says that each student should have an individualized plan. Because both are required mandates, the administration relies heavily on data to determine if students are successful. Collaboration and shared leadership practices are one way to ensure this happens. Evidence-based leadership practices are linked to interventions that will increase the progress of all students while tending to the needs of the individual supporting the notion that “Leadership that embraces evidence-based practices promises new opportunities to collect and use data related to student achievement in determining which approaches to leadership practice, contribute toward positive student outcomes.” (Boscardin, 2007, p.198).

To meet the legal requirements of ESSA and IDEA, principals must have a strong knowledge base and skill set to be instructional leaders for special education students and teachers. Principals who attain licensure through alternate means have little to no training in special education. Roberts & Guerra (2017) state, “These principals can walk onto campus with no formal training in instructional leadership at all, much less leadership of special education programs or national initiatives” (p. 5).

Knowledge of Special Education

Despite a lack of background knowledge, principals can provide quality support to teachers (Correa & Wagner, 2011). A major problem cited by beginning special educators is principals with a lack of understanding of what they do (Billingsley et al., 2004). Principals should provide guidance and support to teachers, but without the proper understanding of the specifics of the job, this is an impossible task. Billingsley et al. (2004) support this finding saying, “Educational leaders also need to better understand what special educators do and help them feel part of the school” (p. 346). To provide leadership of special education teacher and students with disabilities requires a specific skill set that blends traditional methods with those knowledgeable in special education (Boscardin, 2007).

Administrative behaviors directly influenced teacher decisions about remaining in the field. Principals may know what to do, but that does not necessarily mean it will happen. Time is a significant constraint. Principals may also lack the knowledge of how to provide the necessary assistance (Cancio et al., 2013). While principals are expected to supervise and evaluate special education teachers, many principals lack background knowledge of components of special education (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Even if the

administration was universally available, “administrative assistance was rated less helpful than that provided by other special education teachers and department chairs” (p 17) because of the other teachers and department chairs more likely to offer advice that was more beneficial and practical (Griffin, 2010).

While principals are providing some degrees of support, teachers do not find the support helpful because it is not in the specific areas of need (Littrell et al., 1994). To be successful using professional development, administrators need to know in what areas to provide additional training explicitly (Berry et al., 2011). Principals often do not see the perspective of the specific teacher and, in turn, do not successfully adapt and implement meaningful professional development (Munir & Khalil, 2016). The inability to provide administrative support often comes from a lack of administration’s experience and knowledge in the demands of special education (Otto & Arnold, 2005). Principals are poorly prepared to serve as instructional leaders because they do not have the knowledge and training of policy, disorders, and disabilities (Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

In 2010, McHatton et al. completed a study in which participants were asked to rate their self-efficacy in legal issues, characteristics, modification and accommodations, discipline, and funding. More than 50% said they strongly agreed that they were prepared to tackle those issues about special education. This study supports what other studies have concluded that there is a disconnect between principal preparation programs and what the job requires. The study reports that “Participants reported spending a majority of their time conducting teacher observations, participating in initial IEP/EP meetings, reviewing lesson plans, facilitating department meetings, and participating in annual IEP/EP meetings respectively” (p. 14) but the results suggested

the need for more emphasis in these areas. The study indicated that two-thirds of the participants reported they felt either neutral or not prepared for the responsibility surrounding exceptional children (McHatton et al., 2010).

Principals should ensure that observations are aligned with school goals and not random factors (Bellibaş, 2015). Principals are expected to conduct evaluations and provide feedback for special education teachers despite a lack of understanding of the job components (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Educational leaders should be cognizant of instructor abilities, classroom makeup, classroom management styles, and content area when making educational decisions which will impact both general education and special education students (Demirdag, 2017). Demographic variables and perceptions were positively linked. Older and more experienced teachers expect more from leaders by way of trust, shared visions, responsibility, and other factors (Munir & Khalil, 2016).

Principal Training Programs and Licensure

Emerging themes in the literature include the principal's influence regarding subject matter knowledge, classroom privacy, and lack of coherence (Bellibaş, 2015). The support and level of background knowledge a principal possesses directly impact the rates that special education teachers leave the profession (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Principals that hold a special education certification say that they are more active in special education instruction and are better prepared (Frost & Kersten, 2011).

Principal preparation programs have not adequately prepared principals for the role of instructional leaders for students with disabilities (Lynch, 2012). Since the role of the principal has shifted, university preparation programs have been forced to shift from theory-based instruction to practice. Without the proper training, principals are not

prepared to deal with issues that may be programmatic or personnel in nature regarding exceptional education (McHatton et al., 2010). To combat this problem, one study recommends that principal training programs include more specific topics about special education in a school law course. A stronger suggestion is to include a course specifically designed as Special Education Leadership (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Another study suggests that possible implications of the research be that principal leadership programs add components of servant leadership to enhance the servant-like leadership tendencies of new principals (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

Theoretical Framework Application

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior is an expansion of one of Fishbein's and Ajzen's (2010) previous ideas, Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). In the TRA, three elements or factors shape the behavioral intention: individual's attitude, perceived norms, and perceived behavioral control. The individual's attitude equates to his or her opinion of the subject matter. This is a specific opinion that will help predict the outcome behavior. The second element, perceived norms, results from social expectations. The individual interprets social queues and postulates his or her personal norms. Normative beliefs are classified as what an individual believes others expect. Motivation to comply is the need to comply with those expectations. The final element is the perceived behavioral control of the individual. This control may be a result of internal or external factors. All three of these elements combined are used to determine one's intentions, thus leading to actions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Expanding on the ideas of Theory of Reasoned Action, Ajzen and Fishbein created a model to further illustrate the concepts. The model shows that attitude,

subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all link to one another. The combination of the three factors forms the intention. The intention leads to the behavior. The degree of control may bypass the intention and lead straight to the behavior depending on how strong that control is perceived to be (Ajzen, 1991).

In this study, the teacher's intent to stay with the current assignment is the intended behavior the researcher is seeking to predict. The teacher's attitude on the principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure serves as a large indicator of the intention and the action. In this case, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control will be implied. The focus is on the behavioral beliefs, or opinions, the teacher has regarding the principal's actions. According to the Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior, if a teacher has a positive opinion of the principal, then he or she is more likely to stay in the current assignment. If the teacher has a negative opinion of the principal, then the theories state that he or she will be more likely to leave the assignment.

CHAPTER III

This study's purpose was to explore the relationship between a special education teacher's decision to remain in their current assignment and a principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure. The following questions were explored: 1) To what degree do special education teachers believe a principal's behavior demonstrates knowledge of special education policy and procedure 2) To what degree do special education teachers report their principal's behavior exhibits overall support for special education teachers and students? 3) To what degree does the special education teacher's confidence in the principal's support and knowledge correlate with his/her intent to stay in the current school?

Participants and Sample

The population of this study was current P-12 special education teachers or teachers who had taught special education within the last 5 years in the United States. The participants included in the pilot sample, conducted to determine validity and reliability of the instrument, were special education teachers selected from one school district in Mississippi. The study sample was drawn from special education teachers who participated in one of several special education focused Facebook groups of educators across the United States.

Instrument

The questionnaire for the study was self-created and piloted (APPENDIX D). There were two yes/no qualifier questions at the beginning. The items to support the research questions were five-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Each item was divided into subsets. Overarching research question one

had a total of six items. Supporting research question one had a total of seven items. Supporting research question two had a total of four items.

Design

This quantitative study was conducted using the survey method administered online. The instrument was distributed using snowball sampling. The sample for the pilot study was special education teachers from one school district in Mississippi. The study sample frame was special education teachers who were members of an online community via social media. Variables of interest in the study were teacher's confidence in principal's overall support, teacher's confidence in principal's overall knowledge, and the teacher's intent to stay in the current district and/or assignment. The pilot was distributed by email and the study was distributed through social media posts. All other procedures for both studies were the same.

Procedure

This study took place in two phases, a pilot study conducted within a single school district in Mississippi and the actual study recruited participants drawn from one of several Facebook groups focused on special education.

Pilot Study

A letter granting permission from the Superintendent of Education of Forrest County School District was obtained (APPENDIX A). Once IRB approval had been obtained (APPENDIX B), teachers from all six schools in the district were sent an email with a link to the Qualtrics questionnaire and a message outlining information about the study, time requirements, potential harm, and participation requests (see APPENDIX C). The questionnaire began with a letter of consent stating that participation is voluntary,

and that all information will be kept confidential and secure. A reminder email was sent after five days and ten days. No incentive was offered. All other procedures past this point were the same as the actual study. The instrument was piloted with twenty-five responses and evaluated for reliability and validity. The instrument was not changed based on the pilot. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for the entire instrument showed a reliability score ranging from .909 to .983 on each grouping of items showing solid reliability.

Actual Study

A link from Qualtrics was posted in several Facebook groups for special education teachers with a message outlining information about the study, time requirements, potential harm, and participation requests (see APPENDIX C). The link took potential participants to the Qualtrics page. The questionnaire began with a letter of consent stating that all information will be anonymous and secure. The Qualtrics account was password protected as were the computers that access it. The information was stored on the secure and password protected server. The same message was shared on the researcher's personal social media network. Five days and ten days following the original postings, the same message was posted. Once the results were finalized, the data were analyzed.

Limitations of the study included the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers leaving. No consideration was given to the pandemic being a cause of attrition. Future studies would be able to address this limitation by limiting the field to special education teachers who were still teaching post-pandemic, or a separate study using a qualifying factor as those who left unrelated to the challenges of COVID-19.

Analysis

Once the pilot study results were complete and tested for validity and reliability, the actual study was conducted. After all data were gathered and finalized, the appropriate analysis was run to determine a potential correlation. Analysis included means, Pearson's Correlation and.

Item number three, which is divided into four items, correlates with supporting research question one. Item numbers four and five are subdivided into a total of seven items to correlate with supporting research question two. Item numbers six and seven are subdivided into six items to correlate with the overarching research question one. The items for each research question will be averaged to get a mean for each participant.

To test for a potential correlation between the means of supporting research question one and overarching research question one, Pearson's Correlation was used. This examined if there is a potential correlation between a special education teacher's report of overall support and the intent to stay based on the principal's behaviors. A separate test was run between the means of items for supporting research questions two and overarching research question one. This examined if there is a potential correlation between a special education teacher's confidence in the principal's demonstration of special education knowledge and the teacher's intent to stay.

CHAPTER IV

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between a special education teacher's decision to remain in their current assignment and a principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure. Specifically, this study assessed the degree to which teachers' perceptions of a principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedures relate to the teacher's intent to remain in the current educational setting.

The following questions were explored: Overarching Research Question: 1) To what degree does the special education teacher's confidence in the principal's support and knowledge correlate with his/her intent to stay in the current school? Supporting Research Questions: 1) To what degree do special education teachers believe a principal's behavior demonstrates knowledge of special education policy and procedure? 2) To what degree do special education teachers report their principal's behavior exhibits overall support for special education teachers and students? The research questions were answered by a statistical analysis that included Pearson correlations and a calculation of the mean of a group of responses. Pearson indicates the presence of a correlation in the overarching research question and the mean answers the descriptive statistical elements of the supporting research questions.

This chapter will detail the rationale of study. First presented is a detailed description of the participants and sample selection. Next, the presentation of results will elaborate on the quantitative analysis used to answer the research questions starting with the supporting research questions and leading to the overarching research question.

Finally, the analysis of the results and findings will synthesis the results against the theoretical framework.

Description of Participants

This study focused on current special education teachers or those who have taught special education in the last five years. Participants were asked two qualifying questions to ensure they met these criteria prior to beginning the questionnaire. If they did not meet the criteria, the survey was terminated.

Participants were recruited using social media. The researcher posted a message to multiple groups and pages on social media asking for participation as well as asking for others to share the post. This post and process were repeated over a three-week period until enough participants were reached. A noteworthy mention was the time of year this study was completed. The researcher posed these questions on social media during the late summer when teachers had already decided regarding employment for the following school year. This may have impacted the participation rate.

The researcher aimed at having a minimum of one hundred participants in the sample. At the end of the three-week period, one hundred five people initiated the survey. Eleven people did not complete past the first question, so those responses were deleted. Two potential participants did not accept the terms and conditions resulting in termination of the survey. Nineteen did not meet the qualifying criteria which also terminated the process. This left a sample size of 73 participants.

Presentation of Results

This study explored degrees of confidence of special education teachers in the actions of the principal regarding special education policy and procedure and the

correlation to the teacher's intent to stay. This section will detail the statistical analysis of each research question and expand the discussion to the application of the theoretical framework.

Supporting Research Question: 1) To what degree do special education teachers believe a principal's behavior demonstrates knowledge of special education policy and procedure

The instrument used in this study was an original created by the researcher (APPENDIX D). All items of the instrument were original and piloted by the researcher in a local school district with the permission from the Superintendent and the school board (APPENDIX A). The instrument grouped items into sections based on the research question. All items were presented with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items for supporting research question one centered around the special education teacher's belief that the principal demonstrates knowledge of special education policy and procedure. The instrument contained seven items for supporting research question one.

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for this grouping of items was .933 and the Cronbach's Alpha score on the entire instrument was .998. Each statement in the grouping showed a similar reliability score ranging from .917 to .928. This reliability test shows that the items in this grouping have a high reliability score which means the items consistently measure the variable.

The researcher posed these questions with the intent of finding the extent of the opinion of the participant. To calculate the extent, descriptive statistics were employed

using a mean score. Table 1 shows the mean score for each individual question pertaining to supporting research question one.

Table 1 *Supporting Research Question 1 Mean and Standard Deviation*

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
My principal demonstrates a full understanding of the components of an Individual Education Plan.	2.9	1.5
My principal demonstrates working knowledge of the requirements of federal law regarding special education services.	3.1	1.4
My principal demonstrates a full understanding of the supplemental paperwork tasks (progress monitoring, report of progress, 3-year re-evaluations, etc.) associated with special education students.	2.8	1.5
My principal demonstrates the working knowledge to provide guidance on current legal special education policies.	3.0	1.4
My principal demonstrates a full understanding of the district procedures regarding identifying special education students.	3.1	1.4
My principal demonstrates decision-making behavior that is based on best practices relating to disciplinary decisions pertaining to special education students.	3.3	1.4

Table 1 (continued)

My principal demonstrates the working knowledge to make ethical decisions regarding special education students.	3.5	1.4
Overall	3.1	1.3

Participants who rated the item as a 1 or 2 disagreed with the items. A participant assigning a score of 3 was between disagreeing and agreeing. A score of 4 or 5 indicated that the participant agreed with the statement. All the items relating to this research question were grouped and a mean score was derived. The mean score falls at a 3.1 meaning that teachers only slightly believe in the principal’s demonstration of knowledge of special education policy and procedure.

Supporting Research Question: 2) To what degree do special education teachers report their principal’s behavior exhibits overall support for special education teachers and students?

The instrument grouped items into sections based on the research question. All items were presented with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items for supporting research question two centered around the special education teacher’s belief that the principal behavior demonstrates support for special education students and teachers. The instrument contained four items for supporting research question two.

The instrument used in this study was an original created by the researcher (APPENDIX D). All items of the instrument were original and piloted by the researcher in a local school district with the permission from the Superintendent and the school

board (APPENDIX A). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for this grouping of item was .950 and the Cronbach's Alpha score on the entire instrument was .998. Each statement in the grouping showed a similar reliability score ranging from .909 to .983. This reliability test shows that the items in this grouping have a high reliability score which means the items consistently measure the variable.

The researcher posed these questions with the intent of finding the extent of the opinion of the participant regarding the behavior of the principal's support. To calculate the extent, descriptive statistics were employed using a mean score. Table 2 shows the mean score for each individual question pertaining to supporting research question two.

Table 2 Supporting Research Question 2 Mean and Standard Deviation

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
The school principal's behavior toward special education staff is supportive.	3.8	1.3
When I have a problem concerning a special education student, my principal provides the support I need to help me find an adequate solution.	3.4	1.4
I am given the administrative support I need to teach students.	3.6	1.5
My principal supports me in making specific goals and objectives for my student's programming.	3.4	1.4
Overall	3.5	1.2

Participants who rated the item as a 1 or 2 disagreed with the items. A participant assigning a score of 3 was between disagreeing and agreeing. A score of 4 or 5 indicated

that the participant agreed with the statement. All the items relating to this research question were grouped and a mean score was derived. The mean score falls at a 3.5 meaning that teachers slightly reported the principals' behavior demonstrates support for special education teachers and students.

Overarching Research Question: 1) To what degree does the special education teacher's confidence in the principal's support and knowledge correlate with his/her intent to stay in the current school?

The instrument grouped items into sections based on the research question. All items were presented with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items for the overarching research question centered around the correlation between the special teacher's confidence level in the principal and the teacher's intent to stay. The instrument contained six items examining a teacher's intent to stay to be correlated with the means of the other two groupings.

The instrument used in this study was an original created by the researcher (APPENDIX D). All items of the instrument were original and piloted by the researcher in a local school district with the permission from the Superintendent and the school board (APPENDIX A). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for this grouping of items was .824 and the Cronbach's Alpha score on the entire instrument was .998. Each statement in the grouping showed a similar reliability score ranging from .759 to .846. This reliability test shows that the items in this grouping have a high reliability score which means the items consistently measure the variable.

The researcher posed these questions with twofold intent: 1) finding the correlation between the teacher's intent to stay and the teacher's confidence in the

principal's knowledge and 2) finding the correlation between the teacher's intent to stay and the teacher's confidence in the principal's support. To calculate the teacher's intent to stay, descriptive statistics were employed using a mean score. Table 3 shows the mean score for each individual question pertaining to overarching research question 1.

Table 3 *Overarching Research Question 1 Mean and Standard Deviation*

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
My contentment at my current school is a direct result of the support I receive from my principal.	3.7	1.3
I plan to stay at my current school for at least another year.	3.9	1.5
Table 33 (continued)		
I plan to stay in special education for at least another 5 years.	3.7	1.4
I (would) miss teaching special education students (if I were to leave special education).	4.3	1.1
The climate within the special education department at my school is positive as a direct result of the support we receive from the principal.	2.3	1.4
I plan to stay in special education in this school as a direct result of the principal's knowledge of special education.	2.7	1.4
Overall	3.1	1.3

Participants who rated the item as a 1 or 2 disagreed with the items. A participant assigning a score of 3 was between disagreeing and agreeing. A score of 4 or 5 indicated that the participant agreed with the statement. All the items relating to this research question were grouped and a mean score was derived. The mean score falls at a 3.1

meaning that teachers were only slightly inclined to remain in the current teaching position.

To fully answer both parts of the overarching research question, the means of supporting research question 1 and overarching question 1 were tested using a Pearson test for correlation. Table 4 shows results of the correlation analysis.

Table 4 *Pearson Analysis*

Test	Score
Pearson Correlation	.539

Results of the correlation between both variables show a moderately positive correlation. A positive correlation exists between the teacher's confidence in the principal's knowledge and the teacher's intent to stay.

To fully answer the second part of the overarching research question, the means of supporting research question 2 and the overarching question 1 were tested using Pearson test for correlation. Table 5 shows the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 5 *Pearson Analysis*

Test	Score
Pearson Correlation	.506

Results of the correlation between both variables show a moderately positive correlation. A positive correlation exists between the teacher's confidence in the principal's support and the teacher's intent to stay.

Analysis of Results

Ajzen's theory of intended behavior states that a person's attitude indicates their intention preceding a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This study gathered information regarding

a special education teacher's attitude toward a principal to indicate the intention of staying in the current position. The teacher's attitudes were slightly positive in both belief in the principals' behavior showing knowledge and confidence in support. The teachers' intentions were also slightly positive. Statistical analysis shows a definitive correlation between the attitude and intention thus supported by the theory of intended behavior.

Chapter Summary

The study used the survey method to determine a correlation between a teacher's belief in a principal's knowledge and confidence in the principal's support. A series of statistical analysis results show that the teacher's attitudes were positive as well as the intention supporting the theory of intended behavior.

CHAPTER V

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which teacher's believe their principals have knowledge of special education policy and procedure, the extent to which teachers have confidence in their principals' support, and whether there is a correlation between the previous two factors and the teacher's intent to stay in the current school and assignment. Determining these factors and relationships may provide school administrators, district administrators, state leadership, principal preparation program leaders, and policy makers with information to make informed decisions on principal skills and preparations to help ease the strain of special education teacher attrition.

Summary of Study Results

The series of items that teachers rated to determine the extent to which they believed the principal demonstrated knowledge in special education policy and procedure yielded a mean score of 3.1 meaning that teachers have a slightly positive view. This is based on a 5-point Likert scale. The mean scores of each statement in the series ranged from 2.8 to 3.5. Only two questions received a mean score less than three and both of those questions were pertaining to the supplemental duties of the special education teacher and components of the IEP. The statement scoring the highest overall mean was pertaining to the principal's ability to make ethical decisions. Overall, teachers have a positive view on the principal's leadership ability.

The series of items that teachers scored to determine the extent to which they had confidence in the principals' support of special education teachers yielded a mean score of 3.5, meaning teachers had a positive view. This is based on a 5-point Likert scale. The mean scores of each statement in the series ranged from 3.4 to 3.8. All items showed a

positive mean. The highest scoring statement pertained to the principal's behavior to the special education staff being supportive. Overall, teachers rated principals as being supportive.

The series of questions that teachers rated to indicate whether they planned to remain in the current school was calculated and correlated with the mean score of the series of items examining the extent to which teachers believed the principal's behavior demonstrated knowledge. This showed a moderately positive correlation with a Pearson Correlation score of .539. The same series of questions to indicate teacher's plans was also correlated with the series of questions determining the extent to which teachers were confident in the principal's support using a Pearson Correlation. A Pearson Correlation score of .506 shows a positive correlation.

Discussion of Specific Research Questions

Discussion of Supporting Research Question: 1) To what degree do special education teachers believe in the principal's demonstration of knowledge of special education policy and procedure?

In general, the teachers showed a positive rating indicating that they believe the principal's behavior demonstrates knowledge of special education policy and procedure. Teachers indicated that they feel that principals show knowledge in requirements of federal law, legal issues, district procedures, best-practices, and ethical decision making all regarding special education teachers and students. The teachers indicated more negative responses in the principal's understanding of the components of the IEP and all the supplemental tasks associated with special education students. These two items were the lowest means on the entire questionnaire.

The two questions indicating that the principal's behavior does not demonstrate knowledge of the components of an IEP and the supplemental tasks associated with special education students may be because of the specific circumstances surrounding each student. Since a principal's job is a more macro-view of the school, the teacher may feel that the principal does not have adequate understanding of the specific needs and requirements for a single child.

Another reason the teachers may have scored these two items lower is because the principal may lack adequate training in the requirements of special education. Since the other items in this category were high, teachers may feel that the principal has good intentions but does not have the understanding necessary for his or her behavior to indicate such understanding. The literature supports the finding that the principal may lack knowledge and experience in special education which may decrease a teacher's satisfaction in the field (Otto & Arnold, 2005; Gersten et al., 2001)

Discussion of Supporting Research Question: 2) To what degree do special education teachers report their principal's behavior exhibits overall support for special education teachers and students?

The mean scores of all items in this series indicated that the teachers have a moderate level of confidence in the principals' support of special education teachers and students. Teachers indicated that principals provide adequate support. Teachers indicated that principals' behavior is supportive, they feel comfortable seeking support for a problem, and teachers receive support for specific goals and objectives for students.

The statement that yielded the highest mean was that principals' behavior is supportive. In general, this would mean that teachers are confident in the principal's

support levels and the ability to support them. The generalization of this statement supports the literature that teachers who feel more supported by administration are more likely to have overall job satisfaction (Bays, 2007).

Discussion of Overarching Research Question: 1) To what degree does the special education teacher's confidence in the principal's support and knowledge correlate with his/her intent to stay in the current school?

Mean scores from the supporting questions were individually correlated to the mean of the series of items regarding teacher's intentions. Both correlations showed a strong positive correlation using two different measures. The relationship between a principal's knowledge of special education and a teacher's intent to stay is clear.

The theory of planned behavior clearly states that the attitude of the individual is one of three major indicators of a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The noticeably clear correlation between the teacher's attitude and the intent to stay supports Ajzen's theory. The other elements of the theory include subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control can be viewed as several things including the teacher's perception of the principal's control of the school and employment in general. Furthering that perceived control may extend to the teacher's perception of the principal's control of the running of special education including the amount of support. All of these factors would only further support the theory and make a stronger case for the correlation between variables.

Conclusion

A principal's support for special education teachers is necessary for teachers to remain (Billingsley, 2004; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Pedota, 2015).

The teachers surveyed support the literature and theoretical framework. The correlation between the intent to stay and the principal's knowledge and support are strong.

Limitations

A potential limitation of this study is timing at which the survey was completed. The questionnaire was sent out at the end of June after many teachers has already made decisions about employment for the following school year. For a possibility of responses to be truly based on current administration knowledge and support, a better time to distribute the questionnaires would be at a time prior to contracts going out for the following school year while teachers are making the decision.

A second limitation to this study is the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education. No consideration to the impact of COVID-19 was made in the research.

The instrument itself is another limitation. Because the instrument is all original and the pilot sample was small, a larger sample may change the results in Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability rating proved to be high, but a larger sample may have different results. Using a more vetted instrument in conjunction with this instrument may also provide a variation of results.

Sample size is another limitation. Snowballing on social media was the recruitment method used. The number of useable results was lower than expected. A different method of soliciting participation from current or recent special education teachers would have a greater yield on sample size.

Recommendation for Practice

This study showed there is a positive correlation between the teacher's belief about principal's knowledge of special education and the teacher's beliefs of principal

support vs the teacher's intent to stay. The strong positive correlation shows that principals who have a stronger knowledge base of special education policy and procedure and show strong support to special education teachers, then those teachers are more likely to remain in the current school and setting. District leadership could use the information to ensure that administrators have functional knowledge of special education. Institutions of higher learning could ensure that principal preparation programs have a stronger course framework to prepare principals.

Recommendation for Future Research

This research sought to fill a gap in other educational literature. Many studies exist on general teacher attrition, principal support, and special education teacher satisfaction. The research was not specific about what defines support and the level of knowledge the principals have concerning special education being a factor in their leadership. This study could be expanded several ways including geographically and longitudinally.

One potential expansion for this study would be to take into consideration the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. Because the pandemic caused such major changes to the face of education, an expansion of this study to include the impacts of COVID-19 on special education teacher attrition and job satisfaction would be viable.


To expand the study geographically, the study could be limited to principals and teachers in a specific geographic area. For instance, it is possible to survey the principals and teachers in a single state or even a single region of a state. Another geographic expansion may be to compare results of geographic areas. An increase in geographic

region would also be a viable expansion. Expanding to various counties, continents, or even worldwide may prove to have different results.

Finally, changing the format of the study to be longitudinal would give additional and more detailed information regarding the teacher's intent. A pretest of the principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure, a teacher's questionnaire regarding their beliefs in the principal's knowledge, followed by a training program for the principal, a protest test for the principal, and a final questionnaire for the teachers to see if their beliefs have changed. A study in this format would allow the researcher to track and monitor changes in both teacher and principal behaviors.

APPENDIX A– Permission from Forrest County School District to Conduct Research



To: Ms. Tara Clark
From: Mr. Brian Freeman 
Date: May 10, 2022
Re: Research

On Monday, May 9, 2022, the Forrest County Board of Education approved for Ms. Tara Clark, a doctoral candidate, to conduct research on the effect of a principal's knowledge of special education and the retention of special education teachers.

/crj

APPENDIX B – IRB Approval Letter

Office of Research Integrity



118 COLLEGE DRIVE #5116 • HATTIESBURG, MS | 601.266.6756 | WWW.USM.EDU/ORI

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident submission on InfoEd IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22-844
PROJECT TITLE: Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policy and Procedure and Special Education Teachers' Intent to Stay
SCHOOL/PROGRAM: School of Education
RESEARCHERS: PI: Tara Rigdon Clark
Investigators: Rigdon Clark, Tara-Lee, David-
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited Category
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 17-Jun-2022 to 16-Jun-2023

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX C – Letter of Consent

Dear Potential Participant,

I would like to ask you to consider participating in a study. The purpose of this study is to gather data concerning the special education teacher's intent to stay in a current school or assignment and the role of the principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure. Participating in this study will afford you with the opportunity to reflect on your own views with respect to remaining in your current school or assignment. The study has the potential to affect educational practice and thereby be of benefit to children and society at large. Participation involves minimal anticipated risk.

The attached questionnaire covers seventeen statements related to intent as well as basic demographic information. Completion of the questionnaire should take no more than 10-15 minutes. All data collected will be anonymous. Please do not put your name or any other identifying information on the questionnaire. Any information inadvertently obtained during the course of this study will remain completely confidential. Participation in this project is completely voluntary. Please feel free to decline participation or to discontinue participation at any point without concern over penalty, prejudice, or any other negative consequence. Data will be aggregated and summary reports will be submitted by the researchers for a dissertation study at the University of Southern Mississippi. The results may also be used for presentation at a professional conference and/or published in a scholarly journal. Upon completion of data compilation, all questionnaires will be destroyed. Data bases will be deleted following the completion of the study. If you have questions concerning this research, please contact Tara Clark at tara.clark@usm.edu. This research is being conducted under the supervision of David E. Lee, PhD.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (Protocol Number 22-844), which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997. By completing and returning the attached questionnaire the respondent gives permission for this anonymous and confidential data to be used for the purposes described above.

I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Tara Clark

APPENDIX D - Instrument

The purpose of this study is to determine to what degree a relationship may exist

Dear Potential Participant,

I would like to ask you to consider participating in a study. The purpose of this study is to gather data concerning the special education teacher's intent to stay in a current school or assignment and the role of the principal's knowledge of special education policy and procedure. Participating in this study will afford you with the opportunity to reflect on your own views with respect to remaining in your current school or assignment. The study has the potential to affect educational practice and thereby be of benefit to children and society at large. Participation involves minimal anticipated risk.

The attached questionnaire covers seventeen statements related to intent as well as basic demographic information. Completion of the questionnaire should take no more than 10-15 minutes. All data collected will be anonymous. Please do not put your name or any other identifying information on the questionnaire. Any information inadvertently obtained during the course of this study will remain completely confidential. Participation in this project is completely voluntary. Please feel free to decline participation or to discontinue participation at any point without concern over penalty, prejudice, or any other negative consequence. Data will be aggregated and summary reports will be submitted by the researchers for a dissertation study at the University of Southern Mississippi. The results may also be used for presentation at a professional conference and/or published in a scholarly journal. Upon completion of data compilation, all questionnaires will be destroyed. Data bases will be deleted following the completion of the study. If you have questions concerning this research, please contact Tara Clark at tara.clark@usm.edu. This research is being conducted under the supervision of David E. Lee, PhD.

This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. By completing and returning the attached questionnaire the respondent gives permission for this anonymous and confidential data to be used for the purposes described above.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tara Clark

- I accept these terms and conditions
 I do not accept these terms and conditions

Qualifiers

Are you a current Special Education teacher?

- Yes
 No

Have you been a Special Education teacher in the last 5 years?

- Yes
 No

Questions

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The school principal's behavior toward special education staff is supportive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX D (continued)

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am given the administrative support I need to teach students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I have a problem concerning a special education student, my principal provides the support I need to help me find an adequate solution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal supports me in making specific goals and objectives for my student's programming.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
My principal demonstrates a full understanding of the components of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal demonstrates a full understanding of the district procedures regarding identifying special education students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal demonstrates working knowledge of the requirements of federal law regarding special services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal demonstrates decision-making behavior that is based on best practices relating to disciplinary decisions pertaining to special education students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
My principal demonstrates a full understanding of the supplemental paperwork tasks (progress monitoring, report of progress, 3-year re-evaluations, etc.) associated with special education students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal demonstrates the working knowledge to make ethical decisions regarding special education students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal demonstrates the working knowledge to provide guidance on current legal special education policies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
My contentment at my current school is a direct result of the support I receive from my principal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to stay at my current school for at least another year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to stay in special education for at least another 5 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
--	-------------------	-------------------	----------------------------	----------------	----------------

https://usmep.co1.qualtrics.com/Q/EditSection/Blocks/Ajax/GetSurveyPrintPreview?ContextSurveyID=SV_e9Z38arxtEH*SDc&ContextLibraryID=UR_... 2/4

APPENDIX D (continued)

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I (would) miss teaching special education students (if I were to leave special education).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The climate within the special education department at my school is positive as a direct result of the support we receive from the principal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to stay in special education in this school as a direct result of the principal's knowledge of special education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demographics

How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65+ years old

What is the highest college degree you have attained?

- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Specialist's
- Doctorate

At the conclusion of the 2021-2022 school year, how many years experience do you have in the education field assigned as a Special Education teacher?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26+

During the 2021-2022 school year, to what grade level have you been assigned? Check all that apply.

- PreK
- Kindergarten - 3rd grade
- 4th grade - 6th grade
- 7th grade - 8th grade
- 9th grade - 12th grade

APPENDIX D (continued)

In what setting did you teach in the 2021-2022 school year? Check all that apply

- You instruct several classes of different special needs students most of the day in one or more subjects.
- You are an elementary, middle, or high school teacher who teaches only one subject to different classes of special needs students. (This is sometimes called resource class.)
- You instruct the same group of students all or most of the day in multiple subjects. (This is sometimes called self-contained class).
- You are one of two or more teachers, in the same class, at the same time, and are jointly responsible for teaching the same group of students. (This is sometimes called inclusion.)
- Other

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. The theory of planned behavior, *Organizational Behavior and Human Processes*, 50(2), 129-211, 1991.
- Albrecht, S. F., Johns, B. H., Mounstevan, J., & Olorunda, O. (2009). Working conditions as risk or resiliency factors for teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(10), 1006-1022. Retrieved from <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ867126&site=ehost-live>
- Bays, D. A., & Crockett, J. B. (2007). Investigating instructional leadership for special education. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), 143-161. Retrieved from <http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09362830701503495>.
- Bellibaş, M. Ş. m. a. e. t. (2015). Principals' and teachers' perceptions of efforts by principals to improve teaching and learning in Turkish middle schools. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 15(6), 1471-1485. Retrieved from <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=112257678&site=ehost-live>. doi:10.12738/estp.2016.1.0009
- Berry, A. B., Petrin, R. A., Gravelle, M. L., & Farmer, T. W. (2011). Issues in special education teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development: Considerations in supporting rural teachers. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 30(4), 3-11. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/875687051103000402>. doi:10.1177/875687051103000402
- Billingsley, B., Carlson, E., & Klein, S. (2004). The working conditions and induction

support of early career special educators. *Exceptional Children*, 70(3), 333-347.

Retrieved from [Go to ISI://WOS:000189225700005](http://www.isinet.com/GoToISI/WOS:000189225700005). doi:

10.1177/001440290407000305

Billingsley, B. (2004). Special education teacher retention and attrition: a critical analysis of the research literature. *Journal of Special Education*, 38(1), 39-55.

Boscardin, M. L. (2007). What is special about special education administration?

Considerations for school leadership. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), 189-200. Retrieved from <http://leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09362830701503537>.

Buchanan, J., Prescott, A., Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Burke, P., & Louviere, J. (2013).

Teacher retention and attrition: views of early career teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(3).

Cancio, E. J., Albrecht, S. F., & Johns, B. H. (2013). Defining administrative support and its relationship to the attrition of teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 36(4), 71-94.

Retrieved from

<http://lynx.lib.usm.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1070250&site=ehost-live>

<http://wvupressonline.com/journals/etc>.

Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher turnover: Why it matters

and what we can do about it. Retrieved from

[https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf)

[files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf)

Correa, V. I., & Wagner, J. Y. (2011). Principals' roles in supporting the induction of

- special education teachers. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 24(1), 17-25.
Retrieved from <http://www.casecec.org/resources/jsel.asp>.
- Demirdag, S. (2017). What instructional leaders need to know about the effects of inclusion. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 6(2), 175-186.
- Fishbeing, M., & Ajzen, I. (2010). *Predicting and changing behavior: The reasoned action approach*. Psychology Press.
- Frost, L. A., & Kersten, T. (2011). The role of the elementary principal in the instructional leadership of special education. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(2), 21.
- Gersten, R., Keating, T., Yovanoff, P., & Harniss, M. K. (2001). Working in special education: Factors that enhance special educators' intent to stay. *Exceptional Children*, 67(4), 549-567.
- Griffin, C. C. (2010). A summary of research for educational leaders on the induction of beginning special educators. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 23(1), 14-20. Retrieved from <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=49222803&site=ehost-live>.
- House, J. (1981). *Work stress and social support*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hughes, A. L., Matt, J. J., & O'Rielly, F.L. (2015). Principal support is imperative to the retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 3(1), 129-134.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400–1419 (2013).
- Kena, G., Hussar, W., McFarland, J., de Brey, C., Musu-Gillette, L., Wang, X., . . .

- Dunlop Velez, E. (2016). *The Condition of Education 2016*
- Littrell, P. C., & et al. (1994). The effects of principal support on special and general educators' stress, job satisfaction, school commitment, health, and intent to stay in teaching. *Remedial And Special Education, 15(5)*, 297-310.
- Lynch, J. M. (2012). Responsibilities of today's principal: implications for principal preparation programs and principal certification policies. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 31(2)*, 40-47. Retrieved from <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=77758660&site=ehost-live>. doi:10.1177/875687051203100205
- McHatton, P. A., Boyer, N. R., Shaunessy, E., & Terry, P. M. (2010). Principals' perceptions of preparation and practice in gifted and special education content: are we doing enough? *Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 5(1)*, 22.
- Munir, F. Z., & Khalil, U. (2016). Secondary school teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership behaviors and their academic performance at secondary school level. *Bulletin of Education & Research, 38(1)*, 41-55.
- Otto, S. J., & Arnold, M. (2005). A study of experienced special education teachers' perceptions of administrative support. *College Student Journal, 39(2)*, 253.
- Neumann-Cieslak, K. M. *Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of PK-12 Principals as Instructional Leaders* (ED550170). Retrieved from http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:dissertation&res_dat=xri:pqm&rft_dat=xri:pqdiss:3497797
- Pedota, P. J. (2015). How can student success support teacher self-efficacy and

retention?. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 88(2), 54-61

Peterson, R. (2013). Caught in the cross-fire: the psychological and emotional impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) upon teachers of children with disabilities, a therapeutic jurisprudence analysis. *Pace Law Review*, 33(3), 878-964. Retrieved from

<http://lynx.lib.usm.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgh&AN=94806168&site=ehost-live>.

Pierce, S. S. (2014). Examining the relationship between collective teacher efficacy and the emotional intelligence of elementary school principals. *Journal of School Leadership*, 24(2), 311-335.

Prather-Jones, B. (2011). How school administrators influence the retention of teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 84(1), 1-8.

Roberts, M. B., & Guerra, F. R. (2017). Principals' perceptions of their knowledge in special education. *Current Issues in Education*, 20(1), 17. Retrieved from <https://cie.asu.edu/ojs/index.php/cieatasu/article/view/1567>.

Shaw, J., & Newton, J. (2014). Teacher retention and satisfaction with a servant leader as principal. *Education*, 135(1), 101-106.

Smith, D. D., Robb, S. M., West, J., & Tyler, N. C. (2010) The changing education landscape: How special education leadership preparation can make a difference for teachers and their students with disabilities. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 33(1), 25-43.

- Stempien, L. R., & Loeb, R. C. (2002). Differences in job satisfaction between general Education teachers and special education teachers: implications for retention. *Remedial and Special Education, 23*(5), 258-67.
- Teh Raihana Nazirah Roslan, Chee Keong Ch'ng, & Chuah, F. (2021). Understanding students' intention to engage in deep learning: Application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Ilkogretim Online, 20*(4), 490–501. <https://doi-org.lynx.lib.usm.edu/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.04.54>
- Veale, N. W. (2010). A comparison between collaborative and authoritative leadership styles of special education administrators. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals, 147-156.*
- Youngs, P. P., Hyun-Seung, K., & Pogodzinski, B. (2015). How middle school principals can affect beginning teachers' experiences. *Journal of School Leadership, 25*(1), 157-189.