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Cover Page Footnote
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ABSTRACT

This study examined stakeholders' perceptions of the challenges and supports provided for beginning special education teachers in a low attrition district within a middle Atlantic state utilizing qualitative methods. The findings from this study revealed a perceived need for varied supports for beginning special education teachers, the special education coordinator is seen as the main source of support, and the perceived role of induction programs to retain special education teachers and the impact these programs have on teacher retention. Based on the findings from this study, future research should examine the role of e-mentoring, district level support, and the role induction program have on beginning teacher retention.

Keywords: special education, teacher retention, induction programs

Introduction

Many scholars have suggested that teacher quality and effectiveness contributes most significantly to students' learning and achievement (Cochran-Smith, 2006); Darling-Hammond, 2006). Further, the literature also suggests new teachers too often lack the professional support and collegial dialogue necessary to make a successful transition from pre-service to in-service teaching (Danielson, 2002). In fact, a staggering number of new teachers abandon the profession within their first five years of teaching—46% in the United States (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006). This trend also holds true for beginning special education teachers.

According to Plash and Piotrowski (2006), 13.2% of special education teachers leave their positions each year and in rural districts; often, this percentage is doubled. This increasing rate of special education teacher attrition, along with the growing need for highly qualified special education teachers, has led to shortages in the field (Boe & Cook, 2006).

Early career special education teachers who leave the field attribute their flight from the profession to low job satisfaction influenced by a variety of factors (Billingsley, 2007; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). Often novice special education teachers are placed in difficult settings due to the shortage of certified

teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003), and these difficult placements are compounded by a lack of administrative support (Nance & Calabrese, 2009; Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, 2005). Such lack of support can lead to higher stress levels and lower job satisfaction among special education teachers when compared to their general education counterparts (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). The shortage of certified teachers has led to employing individuals who lack the necessary professional knowledge and certification, employing less than fully qualified individuals has a negative impact on student achievement (Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011). In order to meet the needs of all students, especially those with special needs, supporting and retaining certified special education teachers through quality induction programs may be a way to reduce the flow of special education teachers from the profession.

Induction theory maintains that teaching is complex work and is learned over the course of one's professional career. Teacher preparation, while important, is not sufficient for learning all there is to know about teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Induction often refers to three concepts: (1) a unique phase as an individual transitions from being a student of teaching to becoming a teacher of students; (2) a period of socialization into the norms of the profession; and (3) formal programs and comprehensive systems of sustained support and professional development for teachers in their first few years in the profession (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999 as cited in Achinstein & Athanases, 2006). Similarly, Serpell (2000) defined induction as a process that, "begins with the signing of a contract, continues through orientation, and moves toward

establishing the teacher as a professional" (p. 3). Induction programs are multi-faceted, but certain aspects are required for effectiveness. A major component of a successful induction program is providing novice teachers with mentors.

Ideally, these mentors are able to meet both the career and socio-emotional needs of their protégés (Kram, 1986, 1988; Schlichte, et al., 2005); however, this is not always possible for novice special education teachers. A new special education teacher is often partnered with a general education teacher because there are no other special education teachers within a particular school or regional area (Holdman & Harris, 2003). While general education teachers have much to offer to novice special education teachers, the general education teachers often lack the specific career knowledge that these new special education teachers need. Further, rural districts often struggle to assign beginning teachers a mentor with a similar position within their building. In these instances, rather than assigning a mentor outside of special education, or in another building, e-mentoring is a possibility.

E-mentoring is defined as, "the use of computer-mediated communications such as e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, blogs, Web conferencing, and growing Internet-based solutions that are changing the way mentors and mentees interact" (Smith & Israel, 2010, p. 30). An induction program that makes use of virtual mentoring could better meet the needs of novice special education teachers by ensuring that they were mentored by certified special education teachers (Holdman & Harris, 2003). Additionally, a support team comprised of a general education teacher and

special education teachers, along with other school personnel, could provide problem-specific advice (Billingsley, 2004).

Ultimately, induction programs must be sustainable programs providing information and supporting individual needs of special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004). Researchers have found comprehensive, special education-specific induction program to be necessary for properly supporting early career special education teachers (Wasburn-Moses, 2006). Well-designed induction programs can provide early career special education teachers with the necessary support to keep them in the field, and improve their teaching skills, thereby ensuring that the needs of students are met (Henry et al., 2011). Because special education teachers leave their positions at a higher rate than their general education counterparts (Prater, Harris, & Fisher, 2007), and the attrition rate for special education teachers is higher in rural areas compared to urban areas (Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003), districts and induction programs must explore alternatives to the traditional ways in which teachers have been mentored into the profession. School districts must utilize a variety of strategies for retaining special education teachers, improving their pedagogical skills, and acclimating novice teachers to the school culture (Wasburn-Moses, 2006). E-mentoring might be part of the comprehensive, reflexive induction program that provides a system of ongoing support, serving to reverse the current trend of special education teacher attrition (Leko & Smith, 2010). For this study, the experiences of novice special education teachers and their mentors in a rural school district not experiencing the typical attrition rates were examined. Exploring the experiences of new teachers and their mentors might uncover ways through which induction programs and mentoring relationships might be designed to fully support the professional development of all stakeholders.

Methods

This qualitative study was designed to explore the perceptions of various stakeholders in a rural school district regarding the challenges beginning special education teachers face and the nature of the supports provided through induction and mentoring. How people interacted with their surroundings and the meaning(s) they derived from those interactions might indicate necessary support structures. The study was informed by a constructionist epistemology espousing the view that "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). More specifically, a social constructivist perspective framed the work. The meanings individual stakeholders were constructing would provide information on how mentors and mentees experience induction in particular contexts and how these experiences influence their decisions. Individual interviews explored the following questions: (1) What are stakeholders' perceptions regarding the efficacy of their induction program? (2) What are stakeholders' perceptions of the challenges they face learning to teach? (3) What are stakeholder's perceptions of the supports they need when learning to teach?

The Research Context

This study occurred in a rural county in a middle Atlantic state. The county had a population of 33,000 which was spread among 310 square miles of land. Over half of the population lived in rural areas of the county. 18 percent of the population lived below the poverty level. The county had two high schools, two middle schools, and eight elementary schools. There were 4,734 students in the district, 98% of whom were Caucasian. Half of the students in the district were of low socio-economic status as determined by the need for free and reduced lunch. The average class size in the county was 19 students. The county had an 88.72% graduation rate.

Evaluated by the state standardized test results, five schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP). One high school, one middle school, and one elementary school failed to reach AYP for the first year. One elementary school was in its second year of failed AYP and a middle school failed to reach AYP for the third year.

In order to explore the influence of specific contexts on the experiences of the stakeholders, two schools were chosen as the sites. These schools were chosen because a novice teacher, induction mentor, and building administrator volunteered to participate in the study.

Participants

Participants were recruited by email and chosen using convenience sampling. All of the practitioners were novice teachers, induction mentors, or building administrators. All induction mentors and novice teachers held valid state certification in the area of their current placement.

The participants were divided into two triads, each triad consisted of a beginning special education teacher, a mentor, and building level administrator.

Teacher #1 served gifted students in K-5. She also did homebound instruction and tutored students with autism. This was her first year in this position. She had a bachelor's degree in elementary education with a minor in multi-categorical special education and an autism endorsement. Mentor #1 served as a special education teachers in grades 6-8. Her classroom was self-contained and she provided services for students with multiple disabilities (MD), learning disabilities (LD), behavior disorders (BD), and autism. This was her first year in the position. Previously, she taught gifted students and students with learning disabilities for six years. She was certified in elementary education K-6, MI, LD, BD, Gifted, and Autism. She had a bachelor's plus 15 additional hours of coursework in education. This was her first year as a mentor. She completed the mentor training program to gain certification in mentoring. She was assigned to Teacher #1 because she previously held Teacher #1's current position. Administrator #1 was a middle school principal; this was her first year in this position. She had a bachelor's in science and library science/ technology, as well as a master's degree in educational leadership, and had earned an additional 45 credit hours beyond the master's. She was certified as a principal as well as a superintendent. She previously served as a high school science teacher for 10 years, a library media/technology teacher for three years, and an assistant high school principal for four years.

Teacher #2 served as a special education English and social studies teacher for grades 7 through 12. She served students with LD, BD, autism, and mental impairments (MI). She delivered services via co-teaching, pull out, and two self-contained classes. This

was her first year as a full time teacher. She was certified to teach elementary education, special education K-12, and Autism K-12. She had a bachelor's degree in elementary education and special education and was working on a reading specialist master's degree. Mentor #2 was a physical education teacher. She had been in this position for 22 years. Prior to that position she served as a special education teachers for eight years. She was certified to teach health, physical education, and special education. Mentor #2 had earned a master's degree with an additional 30 hours. This was her first time as a mentor; she was also mentoring a general education teacher. Administrator #2 was an assistant principal for a building with grades 7 through 12. He held a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in education leadership. He was certified to teach general science in grades 5-12, to supervise instruction K-12, and to serve as a superintendent. This was his first year in the position. Previously, he taught general science at a high school for three years. He received mentoring last year in his first year as an administrator. His mentoring was similar to that of a beginning teacher. He had scheduled meetings with a veteran administrator and county level induction support.

Data Collection

Data were collected through individual, semi-structured interviews that were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The purpose of the individual interviews was collecting participants' experiences with induction and providing the opportunity for sharing their perspectives regarding the nature of their individual mentoring relationships (Flick, 2009). Each participant was interviewed once. The interviews were conducted in the schools of the participants.

Data Analysis

Analysis began with reading the data multiple times in order to identify excerpts that provided insight into participants' perspectives regarding the efficacy of their induction programs, as well as descriptions of the challenges novice teachers faced and the supports they needed to effectively address the needs of their students. Subsequent reading involved collaborative coding in order to further specify characteristics of effective induction and the challenges new special education teachers faced. More specifically, conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was a means for describing specific aspects of effective mentoring and induction. Analysis suggested that an effective induction program is a multilayered support system, beginning with teacher preparation programs and extending to the supports provided at the building and district levels. Participants also identified a number of challenges, some of which were specific to special education.

Findings

Stakeholder perceptions of an effective mentoring program consisted of a mentor, administrative support, and the overall support system in the county. Four of the six participants cited an effective mentor as the main characteristic of an effective induction program. The overall theme was the need for varied types of support to guide the beginning teacher through challenges faced in their first year.

Characteristics of effective mentoring

Although there were mixed opinions on the types of support needed each participant cited an effective mentor as an essential characteristic of an induction program. The relationship

and mentoring were perceived as a critical piece of an effective induction program. According to the views of the participants, mentors presented a knowledgeable, experienced, confidant who can guide the beginning teacher through the special education process in their first year. Participant perceptions suggested the mentor should possess certain personal qualities such as good communication skills. Due to the overwhelming amount of paperwork special education teachers must complete, support was needed to ensure the paperwork was completed properly and in a timely manner. Availability and ease of communication were also two factors that influenced the mentoring relationship.

Special education process. The special education process can be difficult to negotiate for beginning special education teachers. Support from mentors can help make this process more efficient. Teacher #2 expanded on her opinion that mentors are the most important induction support for beginning teachers.

> Yes, I think that support-wise it would be good for trainings on like the whole process of IEPs, the whole paperwork. I keep bringing up paperwork, but that's all Special Education is. Um, like having uh training on that kind of stuff would be very helpful for first year teachers

Later in the interview Teacher #2 reiterated her opinion of what supports a mentor should provide.

> Someone who knows what they're doing. Um, who knows the process, and um who's there for questioning. Um, I think to bounce ideas back and forth. Um, I don't know.

Mentor #2 concurred with the opinion that mentors should provide guidance for the beginning special education teachers on the special education process.

> Because they just stepped into a brand new world. So they need someone to say ok, IEP's are due, these are triannuals, this is testing, this is benchmark. Someone who's been through the system who can put those things in order so they don't feel so bombarded.

Administrator #1 stated, "If they're nervous about being a first year teacher and not knowing what to do somebody actually takes them under their wing. Somebody shows them the guidelines…"

This theme was supported by the observation of a mentoring session between Teacher #1 and Mentor #1. During the 40-minute mentoring session the majority of the discussion was focused on the special education process, with IEPs making up most of the conversation. Along with knowing the process, each beginning teacher described personal characteristics that facilitated a relationship where they felt comfortable reaching out to their mentor. Although, there were different opinions about the specific qualities, each described how the connection to their mentor supported them.

Personal qualities. The personal qualities of the mentors emerged as a theme. The participants believed mentors must possess certain qualities that allow them to provide effective support. These qualities help them provide the mentees with timely and personal advice.

Mentor #1 summed up this theme when asked about mentoring, more than knowing the process, each beginning teacher described personal

characteristics that facilitated a relationship where they felt comfortable reaching out to their mentor. Although, there were different opinions about the specific qualities, each described how the connection to their mentor supported them beyond the paperwork. Teacher #1 listed the characteristics she believes a mentor should possess.

> I think they need to be someone who's flexible, organized, reliable, patient. That's a big one. They just need to be there for the right reasons. They need to be there to want to help you otherwise that could be very overwhelming for them and I guess us or the person they are mentoring… They need to be good at communicating.

Teacher #2 added, "Knowledgeable…The skills they are mentoring in." Administrator #2 had a similar opinion about the characteristics that are most important.

> Basically someone who knows what's going on… As far as characteristics, someone in the know… I like them organized. Communication skills, be able to tell them what they need to have. They have to be motivated. I'd like them to be professional.

According to the participants the characteristics most needed by an effective Mentor are flexibility, good communication skills, and knowledge of the special education process.

> ***Experience.*** The participants cited special education teaching as an important trait for a mentor to have. The participants believe experience allows the Mentor to provide advice and suggestions backed by their own experiences.

> Teacher #1 benefits from having a mentor who held her current position the prior school year. She believes this has helped her mentor guide her through the challenges she has encountered.

> Someone who may have faced the same issues. May have been in the same position or just have the experience… I think right now years of experience kind of exceed anything; because I think I feel the longer you do something the more you get to see. So the more options, I guess it's more likely for them to come across what you may be experiencing.

Although Teacher #2 had a different experience, her answers supported the need for a mentor with relevant experience.

> …, like I understand that she had a special ed degree at one time, my Mentor, but I think she taught it one year then did PE the rest of the time. She has the degree, but not the experience as well. I think they need to have the experience as well as the knowledge

Teacher #2 further explains her frustration with having a mentor that lacks that shared experience

> But like I said she didn't have, I mean she had information, but it wasn't what we needed… And, can't really go to her for questions… She can't really help me if she doesn't know herself.

Administrator #2 described the need for a mentor with relevant experience.

> I mean hopefully, show them hey you need to get this done. Lesson plans need to be this way, what they need to do, what they need to have in. Mentor's also, as far as telling them about paperwork and all the logistics. They need to tell them, as do the

administrators, how things work around here.

Mentor #1 believed that experience is a necessity in order to mentor a beginning teacher, "Yeah, if that is where it comes from then yeah. Because if I don't have that experience how am I going to guide her? I guess that's the bottom line." Administrator #1 believed experience within the building is paramount in an effective mentor.

> Someone that has enough experience has enough time in to kind of know this system. As you know education is its own system, its own business. I think it's better to have somebody here for that person.

Mentor #2 discussed how a mentor can provide specific information to beginning special education teachers.

> There are behavior issues you have to deal with and sometimes they might ask me a question about a specific student you know. You've been around that student for x amount of years, you know them better tell me a little about them. I'm more of a liaison to them.

Administrator #2 echoed the need for the beginning teacher to have a mentor with experience, yet suggested that some supports may not need to be discipline specific.

> I mean when you're first hired you are overwhelmed; a lot of teachers are overwhelmed. Um, and you know just helps them feel comfortable and someone shows them, for the most part, not too many teachers, unless they sub for several years are going to know how to take attendance, know how to put grades in grade quick, and know

all the jargon now that we are throwing out.

The observation confirmed the opinions of the participants. Throughout the mentoring session Mentor #1 referred to situations she experienced when providing Teacher #1 with advice and possible solutions to problems she was experiencing.

> *Availability.* Teacher #1 and Teacher #2 had different experiences with the availability of their mentors, but each confirmed the importance of the accessibility. The location of the mentor is a theme that emerged with differing opinions. Teacher #1 and Mentor #1 are not located in the same building and neither of them believes the separate location presents a negative effect on the efficacy of the mentoring due to the fact they developed alternative ways to keep in touch. However, Administrator #1 strongly believes the mentor should be in the same building, even at the expense of experience in the field of the beginning teacher.

Teacher #1

> No, I could see that for maybe other cases being an issue but for us it's not. Just because she's been so open and I have her cell phone number I have a million ways I can contact her and she's always been ok with that. No matter what time, whenever, I can contact her very easily.

Mentor #1 had held a similar opinion.

> No she is not [in the same school], she does an after school thing here, but that's it. But (Special Education Coordinator) gave me at the beginning of the year I had, five or six half days to go spend with her. We spent some time over the summer you know, it's just now that we gotten to the point where we

meet for dinner after school. So I would go see her at the beginning of the year.

Conversely, Administrator #1 believes being in the same building is more important than experience in the same field as the mentee.

> I think their mentor teacher needs to be in the building. I'm kind of big on that. I have a new teacher here and I got to pick her mentor between someone in our building in a different field and someone out of the building in the same field. I picked the person in the building. Just because they know what's going on, they can help them out while they're here… I think each school has a different culture. When I made that decision I knew that my uh teacher that was mentoring my new teacher would be here and she could stop in she could meet on the fly, she could see her at lunch. It didn't have to be scheduled, you know. I just strongly feel that person, whether it's in the field or not in the field. I think it's better to have somebody here for that person.

While Administrator #1 believes learning the culture of the building is the most important job of a mentor, Teacher #1, Teacher #2, and Mentor #1 disagree. Although Teacher #2 is in the same building as her mentor, Mentor #2 has not taught in special education for over twenty years. Teacher #2 stresses the importance of experience within the field, rather than location, as the most important quality of a mentor.

> Every Wednesday she comes in and has me sign papers. I see her every once in a while and she asks how I'm doing. She's I mean she's there for me support-

wise. Making sure I'm not too stressed and everything. But, uh, but not having someone that I can actually go to and show me how to do this is frustrating.

Administrator #2 describes some of the orientation supports.

> They bring them in, the first thing is getting all their paperwork done as far as getting their employee ID, their web ID…They sit down, they just start from square one and tell them about the code of conduct and they go through sexual harassment videos and other things like that

When asked what the most important supports for beginning teachers are, Teacher #2 responded, "Someone who knows what they're doing.…, who knows the process, and um who's there for questioning.…, I think to bounce ideas back and forth.…, I don't know."

> **Effect of mentoring.** The participants provided mixed opinions on an induction program's effect on teacher retention. When specifically asked about the induction program's impact on special education teachers retention only one of the participants answered that it did. Administrator #2 answered, "Without a doubt." The theme that emerged was that induction provided support for the beginning teachers but did not influence retention. Both teachers provided similar answers.

Teacher #1:

> …, I love what I do. I don't think I would ever want to go to general ed and I think it's just more because all my observations and field training has been in special ed. Even though the paperwork is a lot and it's not all that fun, it's still worth it. But I wouldn't say these

meetings have influenced that either way.

Teacher #2 responded:

> I enjoyed working in special ed, I'm not going to leave it.…, but I like working with students in special ed still. If there was something of that sort to come up, or …anything I don't know… just better, sometimes the working environment isn't great, but that's every work environment. I don't know if that would change it or not.

Administrator #1 and Mentor #1 had similar perceptions on the induction program's impact on retention. They both believe the induction program does not influence retention, not because it is lacking, but rather because there are more intrinsic qualities that retain teachers in the field of special education.

Administrator #1 said:

> Well, there are two types of people… you're cut out to be a special education teachers or you're not. It takes a special person…You really have to be a special person and I don't think you learn that. I don't think four years of college makes you special education teachers. I really think it comes from inside, if you're going to stay. I don't think any program is going to promote you to stay in special education if you are just not that person.

Mentor #1 provided a similar answer:

> I think it depends on the person. Now seven years later the county has hired a lot of special ed teachers who are not going anywhere. I don't know that the mentor relationship or the induction program had anything to do with that. I think it's the

personal qualities. These people have wanted to be special ed teachers all their lives. We joke, I'll die a special ed teacher, (Teacher #1) will die a special ed teacher. I don't know that the induction program has any; I think the induction program has more to do with how effectively they do their job or how much they know about paperwork and that kind of stuff.

The stakeholders' perceptions provided data that produced the theme that varied supports are needed for an effective induction program. The indicators supporting this theme are the need for an effective mentor possesses knowledge of the special education process, certain personality traits, experience, and availability. Also, a theme emerged that the induction program does not have an effect on attrition and retention according to the stakeholders' opinions.

Implications

With the challenge of retaining quality special education teachers in rural settings, it is imperative that teacher preparation programs and induction programs take into account the perceived needs of the beginning teachers. Currently most of the literature on induction focuses on the ability to promote retention. However, the findings of this study suggest the quality of the mentoring relationship is a factor related to a positive first year experience.

Often in rural settings, there is a limited number of special education teachers located in the same setting. Given that some participants in this study felt it most valuable to have a mentor with the same background, there is a need to examine the feasibility of e-mentoring. Therefore, developing

alternative means for a mentoring relationship must be a viable option not only in rural settings, but potentially in urban areas where specialized placements may not occur in the same school. E-mentoring could be set up as a county or district program. A web-page could be designed that allowed communication between mentor and mentee through a chat room or discussion board. Administrators in each building could provide mentors and mentees with planning time together so they can meet via videoconference on a computer. In order to accomplish this recommendation data confirming the need for a mentor with relevant experience over a mentor in the same building would have to be provided for the county. This information could be presented to county superintendents in order to display the importance of the program.

Limitations of the Study

This study has limitations that that prohibit impact other than for the individuals involved. There were only six participants consisting of two beginning special education teachers, two mentors, and two administrators. Due to the small sample size the results are not generalizable to a larger population. Also, the qualitative nature of the study allows for subjectivity, which may have resulted in researcher bias. The setting for this study was a rural district in a middle Atlantic state, which does not represent the views and opinions of beginning special education teachers, mentors, and administrators in other settings. Another limitation of the study is the inclusion of the special education coordinator as a contact person. The special education coordinator was the contact person and helped recruit participants. Additionally,

future researchers using these results must be cognizant of the limitations.

Future Research

This study emphasizes the perceptions of stakeholders in a rural county in a middle Atlantic state. Future research should consist of qualitative studies with larger participant base to fully describe the process and challenges new special education teachers experience from their preparation program to their first year. From these qualitative studies, quantitative studies should be designed to provide generalizable results to be used providing better supports for beginning special education teachers.

An equally valuable variable to investigate is the effect of e-mentoring. It is critical to know who benefits most from such a model and if this form of mentoring produces an effective and meaningful first year experience. Comparative studies could help identify the aspects of varying models of mentoring that support teacher retention in rural settings. Such studies could also identify key features of the mentoring process which could be replicated in either traditional or e-mentoring formats.

Additional qualitative research could consist of interviewing pre-service and in-service special education teachers about their expectations of their first year. These additional perspectives would allow for a richer, detailed description of the induction process. The perceptions of the two groups can be compared to determine similarities and discrepancies. Further, comparison of the needs and perceptions of rural and urban settings could be examined in order that commensurate educational experiences could be developed and provided during teacher preparation programs.

Additionally, since each participant felt they were unprepared to meet all of the expectations of a beginning teacher, a noteworthy study would be to interview pre-service teachers' pre and post their first full year of teaching to examine specifically the gap between their teacher preparation and first year experience. The pre and post interviews would provide data regarding their perceptions of the challenges they feel they may face compared to the actual challenges they encountered. Additional information could be gleaned as to their perception of their teacher preparation program as a student compared to their first full-time year of teaching.

Future research should focus on the characteristics that an effective mentor should possess and how to best match them with beginning special education teachers. This research could provide data to change state policies allowing districts to assign mentors based on their ability to help a beginning teacher rather than years of experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the stakeholders' perceptions of their induction program provided information that can add to the body of literature specifically concerning how the experiences of various stakeholders informed their beliefs about the efficacy of particular induction programs. Our analysis revealed that the stakeholders perceived their induction program as having many helpful components, but they also identified aspects of the program that needed improvement. After analyzing the data, the most glaring aspect in need of improvement is a more effective method of assigning mentors. Ensuring proper pairing of mentor and mentee could eliminate many of the shortcomings some induction programs

suffer. Building a relationship is essential to providing effective mentoring support, which is identified by the stakeholders of this study as the most important portion of the induction program. Whether induction supports promote retention or not, providing beginning special education teachers with quality induction is a necessity. Induction supports allow beginning special education teachers to become acclimated to their new position, learn the special education process, and provide effective instruction to help student outcomes.

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