**AGENDA SUMMARY SHEET**

**Title**
Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) – Board of Education’s Strategic Plan, CSEAC’s Annual Report to the Board, and CSEAC Vacancies

**Type of Item** (check as appropriate)
- Action
- Information [X]
- Request Discussion/Presentation/Commendation
- Presentation/Discussion
- Request Scheduled Time (hearing or out-of CDE guest)
- Staff member responsible at Board meeting

**Abstract: Summary Statement and Background of Issue**

- **Strategic Plan** - Representatives from the CSEAC will be present for discussion about the Board’s newly implemented strategic plan and ways CSEAC feels they can contribute to it.
- **Annual Report to the Board** - The CSEAC Co-Chairs would like to highlight the position paper they developed on “Recruitment and Retention” and their position statement on Individualized Education Program (IEP) Efficiency in response to the Paperwork Reduction Act; and ask for the Board’s comments on them. The Annual Report, position paper, and position statement are included with this summary. The 2002-2003 Co-chairs are Stephanie Lynch, Parent Representative and Ed Steinberg, Director of Special Education, Cherry Creek School District.
- **Vacancies** - Annually in April the Board appoints new members to CSEAC. For 2004-2005 vacancies exist for a parent of a child with a disability or an adult with a disability, a representative from vocational, community or business organizations concerned with the provision of transition services, and a representative from the Division of Youth Corrections in the Department of Human Services. Members are needed from Congressional District 3.
- **Vacancies** - Annually in April the Board appoints new members to CSEAC. For 2004-2005 vacancies exist for a parent of a child with a disability or an adult with a disability, a representative from vocational, community or business organizations concerned with the provision of transition services, and a representative from the Division of Youth Corrections in the Department of Human Services. Members are needed from Congressional District 3.
- **Attached are the CSEAC Membership Information sheet and nomination forms. At this time we would like to ask the Board to consider individuals they would like to appoint to fill these vacancies.
- **CSEAC is also receiving nominations for these vacancies. The deadline for applications is November 15, 2003. In March, the CSEAC Membership Committee will be bringing recommendations for the Board’s consideration.**

**Recommendation for Board Action**
For information and discussion

**Originated by:**
Lorrie Harkness, State Director, Exceptional Student Services Unit

**Submitted by:**
Deputy/Assistant Commissioner

**Fiscal Impact:**
Karen L, Stroup, Chief of Staff

**Approved for Agenda:**
William J. Moloney, Commissioner
The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) consisted of 27 members in 2002-2003. The co-chairs were Ed Steinberg, Special Education Director in Cherry Creek School District, and Stephanie Lynch, parent representative from the 2nd Congressional District. CSEAC is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Colorado Exceptional Children’s Education Act (ECEA) to advise the Colorado Department of Education and the State Board of Education on issues surrounding special education. Our mission is to actively represent children and youth with disabilities and impact decisions made on their behalf to enhance the quality of education services.

At the 2002 CSEAC annual planning meeting, the committee came up with several goals.
1. Finalize the Recruitment and Retention Position Paper
2. Write a position paper on Post Secondary outcomes.
3. Address the IEP process and paperwork effectiveness.
4. Work on internal committee processes to ensure efficient meetings and outcomes.

During 2002-2003 CSEAC made the following progress on our goals:
- Finalized the Recruitment and Retention position paper. The paper is available on the Special Education Website. See attached.
- Commenced work on a position paper on Post Secondary Outcomes, but revised the timeline for completion to guarantee a quality document. The challenge of having our Ad hoc position paper committee meet outside of regularly scheduled CSEAC meetings impacted the schedule for completion. The ad hoc committee creating this position paper is continuing work on this document.
- Created a position statement on the IEP process in response to proposed Paperwork Reduction legislation. See attached. This position statement was presented to Joleta Reynolds of OSEP and Special Education Directors at the Legal Conference held in February 2003.
- Created an Ad hoc committee to address the IEP process which was eventually incorporated into a statewide IEP task force.
- Implemented several ongoing practices to improve the efficiency of our meetings including:
  - Placing our mission statement on all meeting agendas
  - Surveyed members about the internal challenges to develop group norms.
  - Scheduled standing subcommittee work at a time which was more productive for the committee.
In addition to the achievements on CSEAC goals, we also accomplished the following:

- CSEAC members presented on a panel at the Legal Conference held in February 2003.
- CSEAC was represented at the Colorado Ascends conference in April 2003.
- CSEAC presented the highlights from the Linking General Education and Special Education to the Board of Education in September.
- Jason Glass of the Exceptional Student Services Unit presented the State Improvement Plan to CSEAC and received feedback from the group which was included in State Improvement Plan revisions.
- Janet Filbin of the Exceptional Student Services Unit presented the CSAP/CSAP-A results to CSEAC, and the group provided feedback on challenges of administering CSAP-A, as well as the challenges of determining the eligibility of students to take CSAP-A.
- CDE Attorneys Charles Masner and Laura Freppel presented information on Special Education Dispute Resolution data for 2002-2003. They also provided the group with historical data on Due Process hearings and Complaints from previous years. We also discussed proposed changes to IDEA and their impacts on the Dispute Resolution process in Colorado.
- Several members participated in Sliver Grant reviews, as well as attended local and national conferences on Special Education.

CSEAC standing subcommittees also accomplished many objectives:

- The goal for the Bylaws subcommittee was to update the CSEAC bylaws which was accomplished as of Fall 2002.
- The Communications subcommittee saw many changes during the year, however they accomplished disseminating CSEAC meeting information in the PEAK Parent Center newsletter; coordinated changes to the CSEAC brochure; and implemented the CSEAC list serve. This is only a sampling of the accomplishments of the Communications subcommittee—additional details can be found in their attached year end report.
- The goal of the State Improvement Plan subcommittee was to refine the process of obtaining graduation rates for special education students to provide more accurate data. Subcommittee member Debi Blackwell created and disseminated a drop-out survey to Special Education Directors across the state. The subcommittee report includes the results of this survey.
- The Legislative subcommittee focused on the Paperwork Reduction legislation introduced in Congress, the reauthorization of IDEA, and the monitoring of state budget issues, especially as it pertains to Amendment 23 funding, and the impacts of voucher legislation as it affects special education students.
- The Membership subcommittee focused on the recruitment of new members to CSEAC, and ensured that the representation included the categories as mandated by IDEA. They successfully recruited full membership for 2003-2004, and are looking to fill an opening for Business or Vocational representative for the 2004-2005 committee.
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION RESOLUTIONS
Position/Policy Statement of the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee
January 2003

The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) has taken the following position on the issue of resolving the critical problem of recruitment and retention of special educators:

I. Statement of Values

Whereas The purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to ensure all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living. (IDEA 1997)

Whereas All personnel necessary to carryout part B of IDEA must be appropriately and adequately prepared. (IDEA 300.380-300.382)

Whereas All personnel providing special education services to children with disabilities shall be qualified. (Exceptional Children’s Education Act, ECEA 3.04)

Whereas Sufficient Personnel shall be available to provide for identification, referral, assessment, determination of disability and eligibility for special education services and development and review of Individual Education Programs, (IEPs), and to provide special education instructional and related services to implement all IEPs for children with disabilities. (ECEA 3.03)

Whereas the Colorado State Improvement Plan (SIP) submits there will be an adequate supply of qualified personnel and effective training programs to meet the identified needs of children with exceptional needs and provide access to quality education. (CDE SIP)

Whereas addressing strategies on how the state will work in collaboration with other states, particularly neighboring states, to address the lack of uniformity and reciprocity in the credentialing of teachers and other personnel. (IDEA 653.c.3.D.v.) is essential in the state improvement grant application.

Whereas the state improvement plan should address strategies that will address systemic problems identified in Federal Compliance reviews, including shortages of qualified personnel (IDEA 653.c.3.E), is elemental in the state improvement grant application process.
II. It is the opinion of the Colorado State Special Education Advisory Committee that appropriate services for students with exceptional learning needs are severely compromised by the following challenges:

1. An increasing trend towards professional attrition in the field of special education, compounded by a critical shortage of college students preparing for careers in the field. This is being impacted, among other things, by:
   a) Political climate at Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)
   b) Change to CCHE
   c) New IHE standards
   d) Lack of money to make changes at the post secondary level
   e) No local training programs for parts of Colorado (NW, SW, SE, NE)
   f) Training inadequate to meet the vast needs in the field

2. There is an inadequate supply of quality applicants, due largely to:
   a) Low resource pool, especially in rural areas
   b) Working conditions
   c) Few incentives to be able to pay for continuing education
   d) Lack of qualified para-educator support
   e) Lack of a formal "recruitment" strategy from administration

3. The retention of special education teachers is directly correlated with poor working conditions and a lack of incentives to remain in the position because of:
   a) Lack of administrative support at the building level
   b) High number of students on caseloads, teachers not adequately trained for the wide variety of student needs
   c) Overload: lack of time to do their job properly (i.e. paperwork, collaboration, meetings, conferences, professional development, and work with para-educators)
   d) Inadequate mentoring, training and salary compensation
   e) Many teachers are not sufficiently qualified or trained when they begin the job
f) Veteran teachers are not given incentives to stay, and there are limited opportunities for advancement professionally

g) Disenfranchisement and apathy; burnout

h) Parent and legal pressure, complaints

i) Negative attitudes/lack of overall acceptance of students with disabilities in all school settings by teachers and administrators

j) Lack of collegial and administrative support for special educators working in the public school setting

k) Increasing responsibilities for information management (paperwork) vs time in direct teaching/working with students
III. THEREFORE, if special education students are to receive quality education, we need to do a much better job in retaining their special education teachers. Improved efforts in recruitment and retention must be expanded in these areas:

A. Administrative Support:

2. Encourage principals to provide thoughtful and effective feedback to special education teachers, focusing on high standards, recognition of success, and task accomplishment.

3. Encourage principals to adopt management styles encouraging and respecting teacher autonomy and input regarding building decisions.

4. Encourage principals to assist special education teachers in thinking through conflicts and confusions in the demands of their job and to assist those teachers in resolving interpersonal conflicts with other staff members.

5. Encourage principals to set a positive tone for the building regarding special education services within the building; engender a school culture that encourages support for all fellow teachers.

6. Provide more support through training and development for principals and administrators.

B. Linking General and Special Education

7. Encourage school personnel to develop and model an understanding of special education teachers’ roles; engage in meaningful, substantive conversations between special education teachers, regular education teachers, and administrators regarding the roles of special education teachers in the building.

8. Actively encourage camaraderie and discussion between regular and special education teachers; use creative means to engage special education teachers in substantial communication with members of the general education faculty; provide adequate time within the school day for on-going collaboration between special and regular education.
9. Provide adequate planning time within the school day to allow special educators to develop quality instruction within their own settings and attend to students’ inclusion needs.

10. Understand special education job design and finding means of reducing the ensuing stress.

11. Decrease paperwork requirements or provide support staff to assume some of the responsibilities for paperwork.

12. Consider additional pay when paperwork is required (due to volume) to be completed outside of the school day.

13. Limit class sizes and case loads to ensure adequate attention and instruction to special education students.

14. Encourage collaborative partnerships between institutions of higher education (IHE) and school districts, focusing on mutual needs, extended and quality supervision from university instructors, and bi-directional, creative, effective professional development within that partnership.

15. Encourage IHE programming that addresses not only the necessary instructional elements for special education students (i.e. procedural and conditional knowledge) but also the cognitive/affective needs (i.e. identifying stress elements, coping with stress, realistic expectations) of the special education teachers.

16. Implement and support effective, long term mentoring programs for beginning special education teachers.

17. Provide opportunities and time within the school day for special education teachers to collaborate, observe each other, and interact both within and across school districts.

18. Provide timely, informative, on-going professional development opportunities and trainings at the district level; actively support attendance at conferences and other forms of ‘ongoing learning,’ especially by LEAs, (lead educational agencies).
19. Re-examine the practice of assigning new teachers to the least desirable situations. Instead, reserve more difficult assignments for expert teachers, assigning beginning special education teachers to jobs that match their experience and training.

20. Focus, in research, on what specific strategies have been supported in enhancing the retention of special education teachers; focus on those alterable working conditions that could be controlled/modified to improve special education teacher working conditions and retention.

21. Discern and analyze more accurate data about recruitment and retention (i.e. teachers who are prepped in state versus out of state, what is happening with graduates who have special education degrees but don’t enter the profession, who graduates in Colorado and then goes out of state to teach) to develop a more comprehensive database for research purposes.

22. Investigate the provision of tuition assistance for experienced special education teachers who wish additional training/education and who are willing to then stay within the profession.

23. Develop self-efficacy in teachers by better preparing them to assess the success of their instruction through the use of techniques designed to collect and evaluate data.
IV. BE IT RESOLVED that the CSEAC recommends the following policies be adopted:

Immediate Actions:

1. Develop reciprocity and licensure variance policies that will encourage teacher recruitment to and retention within Colorado.
2. Provide mentoring and new educator support.
3. Increase distance learning opportunities.
4. Design and implement effective recruitment strategies.
5. Research incentives around salary and training.
6. Leverage time with technology and clerical supports to reduce paperwork burden.
7. Collaborate with general education to create better working relationships and co-teaching practices between general and special education teachers.
8. Provide appropriate incentives for teachers in rural communities.
9. Create a professional continuum of career opportunities.
10. Support regionalization of programs to centralize resources and limited staff when appropriate.
11. Identify and eliminate existing policies that present barriers to addressing current staffing needs.
12. Promote innovative solutions in each school building and at the district level for more effective information management.

Long Range Recommendations:

1. Develop innovative solutions that will facilitate information management for teachers while improving the process for families (e.g. an IEP facilitator).
2. Work with communities to develop incentives to attract local people to get licenses and come into the field.
3. Develop leaders (administrators and teachers) with demonstrated knowledge and skills to set up mentoring models and programs of excellence.
4. Encourage principals to provide thoughtful and effective feedback to special
Recruitment/Retention of Special Educators in Colorado: Research Review

The purpose of this research paper by the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) is to outline current problems and subsequent recommendations regarding the recruitment and retention of quality special education teachers in the state of Colorado. A review of selected research, including personal, organizational, interpersonal, job-related, and training issues, will provide a backdrop against which
resulting recommendations will be presented. It is our hope that this information will be disseminated to the State Board of Education and Legislature, teachers and administrators, parents, the general public, and to all special education/disability stakeholders.

The research in this area remains in a state of flux as scholars grapple with general research issues and methodology in their pursuit of a clearer picture of recruitment and retention issues (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1992). Thus, the research cited here represents the most consistent findings of the past decade, with an eye to future gains in understanding. The focus here is on those aspects of recruitment and retention that are most amenable to change, most prevalent in the literature, and most generally applicable to a variety of special educators within the public school setting. As a result, demographic elements (including gender, age, employability, families, and general life cycle factors) are generally not included in this review, nor are those elements specific to special educators within more narrowly defined settings (i.e. those findings pertaining to specific populations or age groups served).

Introduction

For at least a decade, researchers have sounded the alarm about impending teacher shortages (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Sack, 1999). The reasons for this shortage are complex (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Rosenberg, Griffin, Kilgore, & Carpenter, 1997; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). What is clear, however, is that the teaching shortage has resulted in large numbers of unqualified teachers filling vacant positions, something that is especially true in the field of special education (Billingsley, 1993; Sack (1999); Shoho, Katims, & Meza, 1998; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). This, in turn, poses the risk of reduced quality services for special education students (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Sack, 1999; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).
Given this sobering picture, what factors are most prominent in the recruitment and retention of special educators? How can we attract the best and brightest aspiring special educators? Even more importantly, once hired, how can we best support these special educators throughout their careers, thus retaining them to work effectively with our special needs students? For these reasons, this paper is both timely and relevant for Colorado.

Recruitment

The current teaching shortage results from problems both in the recruitment and the subsequent retention of quality special education teachers. While this paper, for purposes of organizational structure, treats recruitment and retention as separate issues, in reality they are closely entwined. This portion of the paper focuses on the most salient findings regarding teacher recruitment with information about attrition and retention presented later.

Carlson, Lee, and Willis (2001) supervised a project entitled “SPeNSE: Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education, working in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the SPeNSE project was to focus on data related to recruiting and retaining high-quality special education teachers while enhancing the skills of those currently employed. According to Carlson et al., 2001, the primary barriers to finding high-quality teachers include the following:

24. A shortage of qualified applicants,
25. Insufficient salary and benefits,
26. Openings becoming available too late, and
27. The geographic location of the school.

While the last two barriers are less amenable to change solely through policy, both teacher shortages and salary are amenable to policy changes. Other researchers have made suggestions regarding teacher preparation/license programs and the recruitment of teachers to rural areas. Thus, the following questions will be addressed:
28. How might reciprocity be enhanced across states? Will reciprocity across States improve recruitment?

29. Are alternative certification programs a viable means of increasing the pool of available teachers?

30. Does salary impact the recruitment and retention of teachers?

31. How might institutions of higher education effectively assist in the recruitment and teacher preparation process?

32. What viable options exist to increase the pool of available, quality teachers for the rural areas?

According to Carlson et al., 2001, reciprocity does not appear to be a significant problem among teachers already employed. In fact, most of those employed work in the same state in which they were certified. In addition, the percentage of teachers fully certified for their positions did not differ for those prepared in-state and those prepared elsewhere. Carlson et al., 2001 researchers were, however, careful to note that there is a significant paucity of research regarding the number of teachers certified in one state that did not find employment in a second state. Research is also scarce concerning teachers required to take additional coursework after being hired in order to meet certification requirements in the receiving state.

Despite the lack of research in this area, several researchers have made recommendations regarding the amelioration of issues regarding licensure across states. Recommendation include:

33. Compacting the fragmented licensing system across the states into a coherent, cohesive licensure system. One specific suggestion might be to align state standards for licensure with those established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). An alignment of state standards with CEC standards might make it easier for a fully licensed special education teacher in one state to be issued a full license by another state (NICHCY, 2000).
34. Utilizing agreements such as the Interstate Certification Agreement (ICA), which makes it somewhat easier for a teacher moving from one state to another to receive a license when both states have signed the ICA. While this idea has merit, one problem is that it does not guarantee full reciprocity. Instead, there are almost always state-specific requirements that must be met before a full teaching license is granted (NICHCY, 2000).

A second consideration regarding the recruitment of quality special education teachers concerns the use of alternative licensure programs to increase the supply of teachers. Historically, relatively few teachers have received their licenses through alternative programs. Recently, however, the number has improved, suggesting that certification through these programs is increasing. While little information is available concerning the quality of these programs or the success of their graduates, special education teachers who graduated from alternative routes did not differ significantly from teachers who earned their certification through other programs (Carlson et al., 2001, 2000).

Salary is often cited as a factor in the recruitment of quality teachers. According to Carlson et al., 2001, an experienced special education teacher with a Master’s degree earned an average of $38,774. Some beginning special education teachers, however (at a Bachelor’s level), start at less than $15,000 per year (although the average salary for this experience and education is approximately $27,000). In addition, financial incentives about and beyond the salary schedule are rare. Regarding the salary issues, some researchers suggest that non-competitive salaries contribute to the teaching shortage (Darling- Hammond, 2001). Other researchers recommend that salaries be equalized to reduce disparities between states (NICHCY, 2000). Thus, while the research remains equivocal as to whether salary plays a significant direct role in teacher recruitment (Carlson et al., 2001), numerous researchers have recommended various changes (i.e. pay
for performance, low cost/no cost housing opportunities in rural areas) regarding teacher salaries in order to attract more teachers to the field (Harkness, 2001, Newman, 2002).

The fourth factor regarding teacher recruitment concerns the role of institutes of higher education in enhancing training for pre-service teachers. Regarding pre-service teachers’ perceptions of ‘readiness’ for the classroom, Billingsley (2000) recommended that teacher preparation programs form partnerships with school systems to provide coursework and other forms of support for the many beginning teachers not certified for their assignments. Along these same lines, Billingsley (2000) also recommended that the teacher education curricula be evaluated regarding the extent to which it provides opportunities for pre-service teachers to accommodate culturally and linguistically diverse students’ instructions needs. Finally, it was recommended that teacher education programs enhance field-based experiences for prospective teachers to help them acquire practical skills, understand the challenges and rewards of teacher special education (including the range of professional responsibilities) and access the supports available through many school systems to reduce the difficulties experienced by many beginning teachers (Billingsley, 2000; Morsink, Blackhurst, & Williams, 1979).

The next area addressed regarding recruitment focuses on the unique problems experienced by rural school districts in their attempts to attract quality special education teachers. This is a significant problem for rural school districts (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Newman, 2002).

The availability and access to preparatory programs contribute to the problem. For those prospective teachers already living in rural areas, few local training programs exist and opportunities to increase skills are very limited (Newman, 2002). Several suggestions have been offered, including the offering of scholarships to encourage local students to pursue teaching degrees (LaBerge, 1999).

According to Darling-Hammond (2001), teachers are also hesitant to move from where they are to rural or remote areas where they might be most needed. Collins (2000)
echoed similar findings, stating that isolation, salary, housing, social life, educational opportunities for children, and employment issues for spouses often lead to high turnover. Newman (2002) also cited lower salaries and lack of cultural opportunities as a problematic issue.

LaBerge (1999) recommended that candidates with rural backgrounds or characteristics that predispose them to live in rural areas be actively recruited. Final selling points regarding recruitment into a rural area include the benefits of teaching in rural schools including fewer discipline problems, less red tape, more personal contact, greater chance for leadership, small class size, individualized instruction, great student and parent participation, and greater teacher impact on decision-making (Collins, 2000).

The final area discussed regarding teacher recruitment is that of systematic recruitment issues. While Carlson et al., 2001 cautions that improved recruitment practices will not necessarily increase the overall supply of teachers, they may help match prospective applicants with jobs for which they are qualified.

Carlson et al., 2001, for example, recommends further that districts move beyond traditional recruitment methods and consider approaches like job fairs, external recruiters, and web sites. The Electronic Employment Bulletin Board, developed through the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, is one such electronic website system that has had demonstrated success in recruiting teachers.

While teacher recruitment, as discussed above, remains essential in effectively combating the teacher shortage, attrition is the main factor causing the teacher shortage problem (Billingsley, 1993). Regarding this issue, Merrow (1999) claimed “…we’re misdiagnosing the problem as ‘recruitment’ when its really ‘retention.’ Simply put, we train teachers poorly and then treat them badly – and so they leave in droves (p. 48).” He continued, “Recruiting teachers is an appealingly simple solution to a complex problem. It’s also the wrong approach. It not only lets education schools and public school
systems off the hook, it actually rewards them (p. 48).” Thus, the following section specifically addresses issues regarding teacher retention.

In recent decades, researchers have proposed a number of theoretical models to illuminate some of the issues regarding teacher retention. In an attempt to clarify some inconsistent research findings within this area, Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) employed a research model that specifically separated “boundary” from “core” issues. In this model, “boundary” issues included those elements (i.e. definition of basic tasks, task management, and management of student behavior) most linked with teachers’ basic ‘survival’ in the classroom. “Core” issues, on the other hand, were more reflective of teachers’ endeavors to meaningfully intervene directly in students’ lives (i.e. teachers’ sense of personal efficacy, capacity to exercise professional judgment, and participation in the active exchange of ideas) (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

A second model, utilized by Hoy, Blazovsky, and Newland (1983), employed the concepts of centralization (reflecting active involvement in decision-making) and formalization (reflecting job codification and rule observation) to examine the relationship between bureaucratic structure and alienation in the work setting.

Finally, Shoho, Katims, and Meza (1998) conducted their research using a model intended to discern the levels of isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness of special education and regular education teachers. In this study, ‘normlessness’ referred to a sense of connection to the school social value structure, while ‘powerlessness’ reflected a sense of exercising some control in the school environment.

Together, the frameworks of Rosenholz and Simpson (1990), Hoy et al. (1983), and Shoho et al. (1998) provide a useful means of organizing the various findings within the area of teacher retention for both regular and special educators.

The first of the ‘core’ qualities described by Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) is ‘performance efficacy.’ This, in short, is the sense that what one does, matters. From a research stance, ‘performance efficacy’ is crucial in that a multitude of organizational
characteristics affect the likelihood that a teacher might develop and retain a sense that she or he can positively impact students’ learning. Thus, although efficacy is not a characteristic of the workplace per se, it is a critical component of any model explaining commitment to the workplace. Efficacy is equally important as a perception, which mediates the effects of many characteristics of the workplace (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

“Performance efficacy” is especially important for special education teachers, many of who enter the field in hopes of genuinely effecting positive change for their students (Billingsley & Cross, 1991) and for whom this goal remains a prevalent source of intrinsic motivation (Billingsley, 1993; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). For these individuals, a positive internal locus of control (casual attributions about events in their classrooms or their work environment) provides a baseline of perceived control and reinforces the belief that their efforts and abilities lead to desired outcomes (Rosenberg et al., 1997). Conversely, negative attributions (wherein the control is located ‘outside’ of one’s self and is thus beyond one’s control) can erode their sense of personal control and efficacy (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). Over time, these negative attributions may erroneously prompt many teachers to question their ability to work effectively with students and heighten the probability of their leaving the profession (Gersten et al., 2001). As a result, it is critical that beginning special educators be encouraged to address their belief systems about efficacy and locus of control (Rosenberg, 1997).

The second ‘core’ quality is that of ‘psychic rewards.’ These rewards include learning about positive results, receiving adequate and supportive feedback, and receiving external recognition from co-workers. A key component, overall, is how freely supportive feedback is given (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

This concept of ‘psychic rewards’ is closely intertwined with a key administrative role of providing support to teachers (Billingsley, 1993). Such support can be either of a personal (acknowledging, recognizing, and attending to others) or leadership (clarifying
goals, offering feedback about performance, facilitating professional growth) nature. In either case, the quality of supervision and overall patterns of communication can serve to greatly exacerbate or ameliorate teacher stress (Rosenberg et al., 1997; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).

Overly negative feedback from an administrator, for example, can result in a teacher feeling powerless to effect positive change (Shoho et al., 1998). Such negative feedback may be especially disheartening for special educators, many of who already experience fewer intrinsic rewards (due to role overload and slow student progress (Sack, 1999)) than regular teachers. Consequently, positive feedback regarding successes is essential if principals are to prevent special education teachers from becoming dissatisfied or moving on to work with less challenging populations (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley & Cross, 1991). Similarly, constructive feedback designed to assist special education teachers in fostering improvement is also essential (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Rosenberg et al., 1997). In short, a principal’s ongoing support and positive feedback significantly impact new teachers’ development of professional competence and self-confidence (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Rosenberg et al., 1997; Shoho et al., 1998). Such support and feedback, in turn, directly impact the retention of special education teachers (Billingsley, 1993; Gersten et al., 2001; Rosenberg, et al., 1997; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).

Positive support and recognition from teacher colleagues also contributes significantly to the retention of special education teachers (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Shoho et al., 1998). According to Billingsley (1993) and Sack (1999), collegial interactions and support are especially important for special education teachers who often feel isolated and less integrated into school settings. These professional relationships may be even more likely to have an impact on special education teachers given the current era of inclusion in many educational settings (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Gersten et al., 2001; Shoho et al., 1998, Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). While many researchers,
including Brownell and Smith (1992), Shoho et al., (1998), and Wisneiwski and Garguilo (1997) have cited the lack of collegial support as a significant contributor to the attrition of special educators, Brownell and Smith (1992) have gone so far as to state that lack of support from administrators, colleagues, and parents, is the most frequently cited reason for special education teachers’ departure from the classroom.

A third ‘core’ issue identified by Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) is that of ‘task autonomy and discretion.’ This issue reflects one’s freedom, independence, and discretion to carry out tasks. Thus, autonomy and the flexibility to exercise judgment and choice are inherent assumptions within this issue. Similarly, Hoy et al. (1983), described ‘centralization’ as an element of bureaucratic structure which reflects the degree to which workers are actively involved in making decisions within an organization.

Both task autonomy (defined by Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) as “…the extent to which work provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to carry out tasks” p. 244) and ‘centralization’ (defined by Hoy et al. (1983) as “…the involvement exercised by members in decision making” p. 110) figure strongly in the retention of general and special education teachers (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1992; Rosenberg et al., 1997). Specifically, both professional autonomy and effective participation and execution of decisions within the organization are crucial contributors to teachers’ perceptions of their abilities to impact positive change (Hoy et al., 1993; Shoho et al., 1998). Conversely, a management style that is too controlling often results in a feeling of ‘teacher powerlessness’ wherein teachers may question their ability to impact positive change. In sum, control over assigned tasks and participation in school-wide decisions are crucial in reducing teachers’ overall alienation from work and promoting positive relationships with other staff members (Hoy et al., 1983). Overall, the elements of autonomy and effective participation in decision-making are two of the most consistently cited contributors to teacher attrition and retention.
The last of the four ‘core’ issues identified by Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) is that of ‘learning opportunities.’ This broad category includes elements like the exchange of ideas, feedback from supervisors to improve job performance, opportunities to expand meaningfulness and professional stature, and demonstration of professional skills. For the purposes of this position paper, issues regarding initial training will also be addressed.

Regarding initial training, both teacher satisfaction with, and the overall quality of preparatory program impact retention (Billingsley, 1993; Rosenberg et al., 1997). While research in the training area remains somewhat ambiguous, it is generally accepted that, as related to retention issues, pre-service teachers benefit from training in realistic expectations, potential role demands and sources of stress, and the development of coping strategies (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). They also benefit, however, from both procedural knowledge (the ‘hows’ of instruction) and conditional knowledge (the ‘when’ and ‘why’ of applying specific techniques with various students) (Rosenberg et al., 1997). Finally, for beginning teachers, effective mentors remain critical in mitigating the effects of occupational stress (Billingsley, 1993; Rosenberg et al., 1997; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).

Across the board, special education teachers also benefit from peer support and collegial interactions within the field of special education (Rosenberg et al., 1997; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). Such interactions provide valuable opportunities for special education teachers to share ideas, observe, and learn from each other (Gersten et al., 2001; Rosenberg et al., 1997).

Similar needs exist regarding on-going professional growth opportunities, the lack of which contribute directly to special education teachers’ stress (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). It is particularly important to provide special education teachers with quality professional training to assist in the implementation of ‘best practices’ in the field (Gersten et al., 2001; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). Ongoing and effective professional
development opportunities remain extremely important elements in reducing attrition among special education teachers (Gersten et al., 2001; Rosenberg et al., 1997).

The next section of this paper addresses those issues conceptualized by Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) as ‘boundary’ issues. As noted earlier, ‘boundary’ issues include those elements essential for ‘basic survival’ in the classroom (i.e. definition of basic tasks, task management, and management of student behavior). The successful resolution of ‘boundary’ needs provides the necessary foundation and latitude for teachers to pursue ‘core’ issues within the classroom.

For teachers, one key ‘boundary’ issue is that of management of students’ behavior (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Although the research is somewhat inconsistent regarding this issue, ‘student behavior’ is defined alternately as either disruptive/difficult student behavior or administrative consistency and support regarding that behavior. In either case, both are significant factors in teacher stress and thus negatively impact retention (Rosenberg et al., 1997).

Students’ disruptive behavior is often a significant source of stress for special education teachers (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Brownell & Smith, 1992) and may lead to a teacher’s questioning of his or her abilities to influence student behavior or whether such students are capable of learning (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1992). A key element regarding student behavior management, then, is the manner in which building administrators manage students’ behavior (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Consistency from administrators, in setting rules and enforcing penalties, optimally assists in relieving teachers from anxiety and thus frees them to concentrate their attention on ‘core’ tasks. Without such support, teachers often find themselves spending valuable instructional time dealing with control issues and students’ misbehavior (Sack, 1999). This can be particularly damaging for beginning teachers, who may not yet have the ‘mechanics’ of classroom management under control (Brownell & Smith, 1992; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).
A second ‘boundary’ issue identified by Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990), is that of ‘buffering.’ Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) state that, “in effective organizations, managers…buffer workers to reduce extraneous forces that may upset the pursuit of organizational goals (p. 245).” In a school then, a principal might act to ‘buffer’ classroom time and activities by attending to material requirements of instructional programs, mobilizing outside resources (i.e. volunteers) to assist teachers with non-teaching tasks, and protecting classroom time from unnecessary interruptions.

Excessive paperwork is one such extraneous classroom responsibility that is consistently reported in the professional literature as a key contributor to the attrition of special education teachers (Billingsley, 1993). The reasons for this vary widely, from lack of pay for long hours outside of the school day to complete such paperwork to the amount of time and energy taken from actual instruction and time with students to complete paperwork (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1992). While it is recognized that federal, state, and local mandates (and school districts’ responses to and interpretation of such mandates) require excessive paperwork (Brownell & Smith, 1992), the unseemly burden on special education teachers contributes greatly to their attrition (Billingsley, 1993). Finally, while various suggestions have been made to ameliorate the effects of excessive paperwork (i.e. employing clerical assistance, providing time within the school day to complete such paperwork, employing special education department chairs to assist with paperwork (Brownell & Smith, 1992)), there appears to be little if any consistent and effective effort to reduce this ongoing source of stress.

The final issue to be addressed in this paper is that of ‘normlessness.’ As referenced by Shoho et al. (1998), ‘normlessness’ entails a sense of special education teachers’ perhaps feeling less connected to the school social value structure than regular education teachers because the traditional school tends to place special education teachers and their services in a subordinate support role. While ‘normlessness’ presents in several ways, one of the most prevalent can be conceived of as problematic issues regarding ‘role
demands’ (Billingsley, 1993). The first of these demands concern role expectations, which become problematic when special education teachers are required to balance role demands imposed from a variety of external sources (e.g. principals, parents, teachers) along with his or her own personal expectations for work-related responsibilities (Billingsley, 1993).

Along these same lines, ‘role conflict’ occurs when inconsistent behaviors are expected from an individual (Billingsley, 1993). Alternately, Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) define ‘role conflict’ as “…when the organization provides relevant information about a teacher’s roles and responsibilities that conflicts with the realities of daily professional life” (p. 330). Brownell and Smith (1992) speculated that the dual system of general and special education creates differences in role expectations wherein special educator may perceive role as assisting and collaborating for successful mainstreaming, but general educator may perceive special educator as fully responsible for educating students with disabilities. At any rate, although more research is needed to clarify the issues regarding role conflict, it is significantly inversely related to job satisfaction (Billingsley & Cross, 1992).

Not surprisingly, excessive role expectations can result in role overload. Role overload is unreasonable work expectations placed on a person by themselves, colleagues, and/or supervisors (Brownell & Smith, 1992). While role overload has not yet investigated directly, it is closely linked to attrition due to increasing professional expectations (Brownell & Smith, 1992).

Finally, ‘role ambiguity’ occurs when there is a lack of necessary information available to clearly define a given position (Billingsley, 1993) or ‘when an educator has insufficient information to carry out his or her professional responsibilities adequately’ (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997, p. 330). Role ambiguity exists when expectations and/or outcome goals are unclear (Billingsley, 1993) and is significantly, inversely related to job satisfaction.
Issues regarding “roles” continue to be somewhat ill-defined in the research. However, ‘role problems’ (although described only in general terms), issues with ‘role conflict,’ ‘role overload,’ and ‘role ambiguity’ (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) are consistently linked to special education attrition (Billingsley, 1993; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).

Despite some of the shortcomings of the research, however, numerous recommendations have surfaced in an effort to reduce difficulties regarding the roles of special education and regular education teachers. In articulating organizational goals and objectives, for example, rules can be helpful. Rules may also be problematic, however, if either too imposing or ambiguous (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). To ameliorate this situation, principals are advised to provide clear goals and goal descriptions (Billingsley, 1993). Principals are further advised to assess the need for role clarifications and modification among special educators (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) and clarify the roles and responsibilities of special and general education teachers (Shoho et al., 1998). Finally, principals are advised to reduce the role ambiguity of special education teachers (Shoho et al., 1998).

“The key to minimizing the alienation of special education teachers is to create structures that enhance professional collegiality across traditional boundaries and a professional environment that values all participants” (Shoho et al., p. 22).

Summary

The attrition and retention of quality special education teachers is critical in realizing our dreams of providing the absolute best for children with special needs. In the best case scenario, we would hope that high quality teachers, working in desirable environments, would experience greater work rewards thus enhancing their levels of commitment and their decision to remain in the profession (Billingsley, 1993; Gersten, Keating, & Yovanoff, 2001).
Unfortunately, however, our brightest beginning special education teachers continue to abandon the field at an alarmingly rapid pace while many other special education teachers use their assignments as stepping stones into regular education (Billingsley, 1993; Rosenberg et al., 1997; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). Inexperienced teachers continue to be more likely to leave the profession than are experienced teachers (Billingsley, 1993; Rosenberg et al., 1997). Burned out teachers, dissatisfied with their professional responsibilities, demonstrate less commitment to their students and often leave their professions (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). Some even, instead of abandoning the field, ‘retire on the job.’ Consequently, the accelerating attrition of quality special education teachers continues to take a serious and prolonged toll on our children’s educational and social-emotional well-being (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).

Recommended Innovations for a Better Future

Obviously, if special education students are to receive quality education, we need to do a much better job in both recruiting and retaining their special education teachers (Gersten et al., 2001; Sack, 1999; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997)). However, documentation of the needs of those teachers has not prompted fundamental change in the profession (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). Therefore, the members of CSEAC believe the implementation of the following recommendations and innovations to be critical if we are to genuinely support (and thus retain) quality special education teachers in the state of Colorado:

35. Encourage principals to provide thoughtful and effective feedback to special education teachers, focusing on high standards, recognition of success, and task accomplishment.

36. Encourage principals to adopt management styles encouraging and respecting teacher autonomy and input regarding building decisions.
37. Encourage principals to assist special education teachers in thinking through conflicts and confusions in the demands of their job and to assist those teachers in resolving interpersonal conflicts with other staff members.

38. Encourage school personnel to develop and model an understanding of special education teachers’ roles; engage in meaningful, substantive conversations between special education teachers, regular education teachers, and administrators regarding the roles of special education teachers in the building.

39. Encourage principals to set a positive tone for the building regarding special education services within the building; engender a school culture that encourages support for all fellow teachers.

40. Encourage staff to recognize the accomplishments of students with special needs in the building and the accomplishments of teachers.

41. Work with all teachers to monitor and identify student progress.

42. Actively encourage camaraderie and discussion between regular and special education teachers; use creative means to engage special education teachers in substantial communication with members of the general education faculty; provide adequate time within the school day for on-going collaboration between special and regular education.

43. Provide adequate planning time within the school day for to allow special educators to develop quality instruction within their own settings and attend to students’ inclusion needs.

44. Understand special education job design and finding means of reducing stress due to job design.

45. Decrease paperwork requirements or provide support staff to assume some of the responsibilities for paperwork.

46. Encourage collaborative partnerships between institutions of higher education (IHE) and school districts, focusing on mutual needs, extended and quality supervision from
university instructors, and bi-directional, creative, effective professional development within that partnership.

47. Encourage IHE programming that addresses not only the necessary instructional elements for special education students (i.e. procedural and conditional knowledge) but also the cognitive/affective needs (i.e. identifying stress elements, coping with stress, realistic expectations) of the special education teachers.

48. Implement and support effective, long term mentoring programs for beginning special education teachers.

49. Provide opportunities and time within the school day for special education teachers to collaborate, observe each other, and interact both within and across school districts.

50. Provide timely, informative, on-going professional development opportunities and trainings at the district level; actively support attendance at conferences and other forms of ‘ongoing learning.’

51. Re-examine the practice of assigning new teachers to the least desirable situations. Instead, reserve more difficult assignments for expert teachers, assigning beginning special education teachers to jobs that match their experience and training.

52. Focus, in research, on what specific strategies have been supported in enhancing the retention of special education teachers; focus on those alterable working conditions that could be controlled/modified to improve special education teacher working conditions and retention.

53. Discern and analyze more accurate data about recruitment and retention (i.e. teachers who are prepped in state versus out of state, what is happening with graduates who have special education degrees but don’t enter the profession, who graduates in Colorado and then goes out of state to teach) to develop a more comprehensive database for research purposes.
54. Continue additional research into areas such as salary, class size, legal mandates, and teacher preparation (certification path) to discern more clearly the effect of these variables on teacher attrition and retention.

55. Investigate and implement research-based interventions regarding the retention of both regular education and special education teachers.

Works Cited


Colorado Department of Education Web site. http://www.CDE.state.co.us


submitted by CSEAC Position Paper Subcommittee: Leanne Seaver, Chair Patty Meek, Nancy Carlson, Stephanie Lynch, Maha Shea
THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT Bill #H.R. 464
The Position Statement of the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee
February, 2003

The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) has taken the following position on The Paperwork Reduction Act Amendment proposed to the Re-Authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:

While the CSEAC understands and acknowledges the intent of The Paperwork Reduction Act, we do not support passage of this Amendment. We feel the procedural safeguards and quality control measures designed to support achievement for students and promote meaningful family involvement through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA), would be compromised by this Bill. As an alternative, the CSEAC suggests an amendment that would be twofold, allowing states to look at effective strategies to manage notifications/record keeping, considering flexibility in meeting composition and purposes and most importantly allowing states to implement an IEP process that promotes accountability for student outcomes.

I. The CSEAC acknowledges the frequently reported administrative burden presented by "paperwork" associated with the IEP yet sees this issue first of all as a problem of information management. With the advent of research identifying new best practices, and through the development of new assistive technologies, more information becomes available that can improve and enhance supports and services designed to meet each student's individual needs. This information should find its way into the Individual Education Program, (IEP), whenever applicable.

To eliminate the ensuing paperwork/record keeping is antithetical to the goals of special education as well as to the spirit of H.R., 1, the No Child Left Behind Act. It is to misunderstand and dismiss the value of research, technological improvements, and other documented resources, including those generated by each student's IEP team. The real issue that must be addressed is the proper management of this critical information in a way that does not place undue administrative burdens on teachers. CSEAC has identified strategies that could be implemented to address the frequency of notifications about meetings, the facilitation of meetings, the management of records that would decrease the paperwork burden and allow for more emphasis on educational planning.
II. The CSEAC also supports a reformed and refined IEP process that would place more emphasis on improving student outcomes, while eliminating administrative functions that are counter-productive. The state of Colorado is prepared to test the efficiency and effectiveness of strategies that could serve both purposes including, but not limited to:

- Accountability based on student progress as opposed to process
- Improved IEP facilitation and management strategies
- Testing/assessment variations/waivers that focus on curriculum based assessments for students with mild/moderate disabilities
- Eligibility determination streamlining that focuses on the specific areas of need for students as opposed to a “one size fits all” comprehensive evaluation process
- Expanded definitions of "meetings" and their functions
- Funding considerations for improved information management
- Capacity building within the system using paraprofessionals, clerical staff, trained volunteers, etc..., to support IEP administration

The Paperwork Reduction Act proposes changes to IDEA that will not improve the effectiveness of special education for students with special needs. Its remedies focus on the elimination of many important administrative functions rather than on student achievement. The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee believes that the problems targeted by this Amendment are too complex to be solved by reductions in paperwork. Instead, the CSEAC favors a more meaningful, productive re-vision of IDEA that places priority first and foremost on learning for each student.