

# Key Issue:

## Recruiting Special Education Teachers

All resources contained within the TQ Tips & Tools documents have been reviewed for their quality, relevance, and utility by TQ Center staff and three content-area experts. These experts usually have a policy, practice, or research background. The strategies and resources are provided to help regional comprehensive center and state education agency staff become aware of the initiatives, programs, or activities taking place in other settings. Our provision of the links to these resources are not an endorsement but a qualified suggestion that they be considered as an option to study and/or pursue, given the needs and context of the inquiring region, state, or district. Evidence of the impact of initiatives, programs, or activities is provided where available or appropriate.

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**Update by LaTisha L. Putney, Ph.D.**

**for the National Center to Improve Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Personnel for Children with Disabilities (Personnel Improvement Center) at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDE)**



1100 17th Street NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20036-4632  
877-322-8700 • 202-223-6690  
[www.tqsource.org](http://www.tqsource.org)

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## Scenario

Dr. Linda Bryant, principal of Forest Spring High School, was accustomed to filling one or two special education teacher vacancies at her school each year as a result of teacher turnover. However, this year was exceptionally trying. It was five weeks until the first day of school and Dr. Bryant had yet to fill her special education teacher vacancies. At the end of last year she received notice that five of her eight special education teachers were leaving—two were retiring, one left to work for a private company that provided services for autistic children, and one transferred to another district where the pay was higher and where the student load was lower. The last teacher to leave, Mr. Conner was the only special education teacher in the high school certified to teach both mathematics and special education. He left to take a general education position at the local middle school teaching algebra to eighth graders, even though he had just completed the two year district-sponsored special education certification program. Unlike other programs of a similar nature, there was no requirement in his contract that he must continue teaching in the district. The contract merely stated that the participants must make adequate progress in all courses and that withdrawing from the program before completion would require reimbursement to the district.

Dr. Bryant interviewed an average of two candidates for each position at the end of last year but was unable to fill all of them. She and district human resources officials visited nearby colleges and universities to recruit recent graduates of special education teacher preparation programs and participated in regional and national job fairs. There were some promising candidates that appeared genuinely interested in the positions; however, Dr. Bryant knew that it was premature to consider the vacancies filled until the candidates were present and accounted for at Forest Lawn High School. She also knew that she would have to be creative to ensure that the new recruits remained teaching at Forest Lawn for more than just a few years.

To further complicate matters, Dr. Bryant received an e-mail from the district's central office. It stated that despite the rise in the number of students requiring special education services at her school, the district was eliminating at least one of her special education positions because of budget cuts. Although this meant that Dr. Bryant did not have to fill an additional position, she knew that once school started, this might create complications in delivering instruction.

## Benefits

Qualified special education teachers have a strong foundation in pedagogy and are experts in the characteristics of students with disabilities. They have successfully completed relevant supervised field and clinical experiences, are adept in the skills of their respective specialty, and have passed the certification or licensure exam attesting to their fundamental and specific knowledge.

Unfortunately, there is a critical shortage of these qualified special education teachers (Kurtts, Cooper, & Boyles, 2007; McLesky, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004; Rosenberg, Boyer, Sindelar, & Misra, 2007). The shortage is even more pronounced in urban and rural areas (Esposito & Lal, 2005; Jameson & McDonnell, 2007; Lau, Dandy, & Hoff, 2007). Implementing a comprehensive recruitment strategy is imperative for districts to combat the shortage of qualified special education teachers and to provide an appropriate education to the students they serve.

Recruiting and successfully obtaining special education teachers has the following benefits:

- **Attract a more diverse and culturally competent special education workforce.** Diverse and culturally competent special education teachers provide role models that better reflect the cultural and ethnic makeup of society (Nichols, Bicard, Bicard, & Casey, 2008). Employing diverse and culturally competent special education teachers will limit cultural bias or misunderstandings that may attribute to the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education.
- **Meet the needs of students requiring special education services.** Chronic shortages of qualified special education teachers limit the quality of educational services delivered to students with disabilities (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004). Recruiting special education teachers who completed a rigorous academic program and field/clinical experiences provides students an opportunity to meet and exceed their academic and social goals.
- **Improve equitable distribution of qualified special education professionals.** Schools that have student bodies that are composed of predominantly poor or minority students have an even greater difficulty in employing and retaining qualified special education teachers than other districts (Lau et al., 2007). Teachers with minimal experience and preparation are often those serving students in urban and rural areas (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2006). This inequitable distribution of qualified special education teachers can be minimized with urban and rural areas implementing a comprehensive recruitment strategy that allows them to compete with other districts.

## Tips and Cautions

When implementing special education teacher recruitment strategies, it is important for districts to remember the following:

- **Make candidates aware of certification requirements.** Each state has its own licensure criteria. Some require basic skills exams in addition to content-area exams and/or pedagogical exams. Also, even though some states may require the exact same exam(s), acceptable cutoff scores may differ (Coggshall & Sexton, 2008). Therefore, districts must make potential candidates aware of their specific licensure requirements in order to ensure a smooth transition.
- **Market incentive programs.** In addition to making candidates aware of certification requirements, it is important that they are also aware of incentive programs offered by the state and/or local education agency. Highlighting this information in marketing materials and online provides candidates a quick reference on the attributes and advantages of working for that school district. Also, keeping employees and staff aware of possibilities provides an effective and cost-efficient marketing tool. The Oregon Special Education Teacher Recruitment and Retention Project (2007) found that 42 percent of respondents found out about their current position from a friend, family member, or colleague.
- **Collect and analyze data on each recruitment method.** There is a vital need for information about strategies used to recruit special education teachers. Many programs are in place; however, there is limited empirical evidence on their effectiveness. Generalizing the current limited amount of research is impossible due to small numbers of program participants and the inability to make direct comparisons with other populations (Nichols et al., 2008). Therefore, it is imperative for LEAs and SEAs to create and maintain a database of initiatives. This information can then be analyzed to determine trends and make comparisons on what works and what does not.
- **Incorporate the Internet.** Using the Internet as a recruitment tool has numerous advantages. Its relatively low cost and widespread usage allows districts to overcome geographical barriers and recruit a broader audience. In 2002, the Oregon Special Education Recruitment and Retention Project discovered that more than half of first- and second-year special education teachers in Oregon found their current positions on agency websites, job clearinghouses, and other Internet sites. Implementing electronic applications cuts down on processing time which can streamline the hiring process. The web can also be used to conduct virtual face to face interviews with the existence of programs such as Skype.
- **Develop high-quality alternative routes to certification (ARC) programs.** A large number of special education teachers are receiving certification through ARC programs. Candidates enrolled in these programs are not the typical student and often need to continue working while seeking certification. Although programs must take into consideration candidates outside obligations such as family and employment, it is important that these programs provide a rigorous curriculum, meaningful clinical experiences, and adequate support.

## **Strategy 1: Provide Contingency-Based Financial Incentives**

Several districts provide financial incentives to recruit special education teachers in the form of salary increases, stipends, and/or bonuses. However, some found this method to be costly and ineffective and have subsequently cancelled their efforts. For example, the now-defunct Massachusetts Signing Bonus for New Teachers provided a \$20,000 signing bonus to teacher candidates with subject-matter expertise who participated in an intense six-week teacher training program. During the first year of the initiative, they lost 20 percent of teacher candidates, and 31 percent left the hard to staff schools (Brownell, Bishop, & Sindelar, 2005). South Carolina was not successful in its attempt to recruit teachers for high-need areas by offering an \$18,000 bonus (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004). North Carolina ended its bonus program after two years (Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2005). Providing contingency-based financial incentives, conversely, limits the district's upfront costs and greatly reduces the financial risk. In contrast to salary increases and bonuses, these methods require a service commitment from the recipient or a full reimbursement of the award.

### **Resource 1: Teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention in Mississippi**

Enwefa, R., Enwefa, S., Banks, I. W., Jurden, M., & Buckley, D. (2002). *Teacher recruitment, preparation and retention in Mississippi: Issues and solutions*. Chicago: Monarch Center. Retrieved November 15, 2009, from [http://www.monarchcenter.org/pdfs/teacher\\_recruitment.pdf](http://www.monarchcenter.org/pdfs/teacher_recruitment.pdf)

The authors describe three recruitment programs developed by the state of Mississippi to address the need for teachers in critical shortage areas, including special education. These programs provide scholarships and fellowships that may cover tuition, fees, books, and/or room and board for teacher candidates preparing to work in critical shortage areas such as special education and in high-need areas. Students are obligated to work in a critical shortage area or a high-need school for each year that financial assistance was received. Working in these settings for three years will meet the obligation for four years of financial assistance. If the obligation of working in a critical shortage or high-need area is not met, repayment of the loan plus interest is due immediately.

### **Resource 2: Arkansas State Teacher Assistance Resource (STAR)**

Website: [http://www.adhe.edu/divisions/financialaid/Pages/fa\\_star.aspx](http://www.adhe.edu/divisions/financialaid/Pages/fa_star.aspx)

This website provides details on Arkansas's Forgivable Loan program and Repayment Grants. The STAR Forgivable Loan program provides up to \$3,000 in loans for candidates enrolled full time in a teacher education program. Freshmen and sophomore recipients must maintain a 2.5 cumulative grade point average (GPA), while juniors and seniors must maintain a 3.0 GPA in their major area of study. After completing their degree, candidates must commit to teach in a critical shortage area such as special education for each year that funds were received. If recipients are not enrolled full time in a teaching program, fail to complete a licensure program, or do not fulfill the required teaching obligation, they must repay the loan. The STAR Repayment Grants will repay up to \$3,000 per year for those currently teaching in a critical shortage area.

### **Resource 3: Louisiana Critical Teacher Shortage Incentive Program**

Critical Teacher Shortage Incentive Program, RS 17:427.2 (2004). Retrieved November 15, 2009, from <http://www.legis.state.la.us/lss/lss.asp?doc=81075>

Through this Louisiana law, newly certified special education teachers employed in Louisiana are eligible to receive \$3,000 per year for the first four consecutive years in the classroom. A newly certified teacher is one who holds a valid Louisiana teaching certificate and is employed in a Louisiana public school for the first time in the 2004–05 school year.

## Strategy 2: Develop Multiple Pathways to the Profession

Traditional special education teacher preparation programs are not producing enough candidates to meet the demand for qualified special education teachers (Hardman, Rosenberg, & Sindelar, 2005). Therefore, districts are offering ways, other than the traditional teacher preparation programs, for becoming a certified special education teacher. These alternative-route programs are known to attract more diverse candidates than traditional preparation programs (Rosenberg et al., 2007). Although empirical evidence on the effectiveness of ARC programs is limited (Nichols et al., 2008; Hardman et al., 2005), they allow school systems to meet staffing requirements while also gearing instruction toward issues that are relevant to their district.

### Resource 4: Preparing nontraditional adult teacher education candidates to become special education teachers

Kurtts, S. A., Cooper, J. E., & Boyles, C. (2007). Project RESTART: Preparing nontraditional adult teacher education candidates to become special education teachers. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 30*(4), 233–236, 238–248.

**Project Recruitment and Retention.** Students on Alternative Routes to Teacher Training (RESTART) was created at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, to recruit and retain highly qualified special education teachers from underrepresented groups. Participants were considered nontraditional if they (a) had a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma and had been away from formal school for more than a year, (b) worked as a paraeducator, or (c) were age 24 or older or had transferred from a community college. Special education teacher candidates were provided with \$3,500 tuition assistance each semester and \$800 in the summer over four years to complete a 127-credit-hour undergraduate special education program. Of the 34 participants in Project RESTART, 50 percent ( $n = 17$ ) became special education teachers, approximately 30 percent ( $n = 10$ ) were on track to receive certification, and 8 percent ( $n = 3$ ) were enrolled in education Master's programs.

### Resource 5: A critical review of the literature of alternative routes to certification in special education

Rosenberg, M. S., & Sindelar, P. T. (2005). The proliferation of alternative routes to certification in special education: A critical review of the literature. *Journal of Special Education, 39*, 117–127.

The authors provide a historical view of ARC programs and how they came into existence. They conduct a review of the literature of ARC programs in special education in an attempt to identify outcome data on their effectiveness. Ten programs were located, with six analyzing program effectiveness as outcome data. The remaining four made comparisons between ARC programs and traditional special education teacher preparation programs. The authors provide indicators of effective ARC programs but caution that because of the limited amount of data, these may not generalize to all ARC programs.



## **Resource 6: Alternative route to certification program guidelines**

Wasburn-Moses, L., & Rosenberg, M. S. (2008). Alternative route special education teacher preparation programs guidelines. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 31*(4), 257–267.

This article provides seven initial guidelines for developing an ARC program: (1) promote initial classroom survival, (2) integrate instructor-developed and student-developed topics, (3) require collaboration and teaming, (4) emphasize skills needed to improve practice, (5) tailor assignments to professional standards, (6) integrate instruction in technology, and (7) promote professional orientation toward teaching. The authors provide a definition, justification, and example for each. The authors discuss the need for additional research on the effectiveness of ARC programs and urge readers to use the guidelines as a beginning to the development of ARC best practices.

## **Strategy 3: Design Programs for Paraprofessionals to Become Certified Teachers**

Several advantages exist to using paraprofessional-to-teacher programs to recruit special education professionals. Brownell et al. (2002) assert that these programs recruit diverse candidates and those who have knowledge of the community and school procedures; they also note that paraprofessionals already have a commitment to special education and ties to the community, which make them more likely to remain in the field. Also, they are aware of teacher expectations because of their experience working with children in a classroom setting. To make these types of programs more appealing to paraprofessionals, courses can take place in the evening to allow candidates to maintain their paid positions (Kurtts et al., 2007).

### **Resource 7: California paraprofessional teacher training program**

Fairgood, M. (2008). *California paraprofessional teacher training program* (Annual Report to the Legislature). Sacramento, CA: Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Retrieved November 15, 2009, from [http://www.ctc.ca.gov/reports/PTTP\\_2008\\_LegRpt.pdf](http://www.ctc.ca.gov/reports/PTTP_2008_LegRpt.pdf)

This report described California's Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program that provides opportunities for paraprofessionals (including teachers' assistants, library-media aides, and instructional assistants) to become fully certified teachers in critical shortage areas such as special education. This program has been in existence for 13 years and has produced 1,708 new teachers. As of the summer 2008, 434 candidates were enrolled in special education programs.

### **Resource 8: The Texas educational aide exemption program**

Mann, G., Henderson, E., & Riney, M. (2003). *Successful transitions: The Texas educational aide exemption program*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, New Orleans, LA.

This paper provides details of the Texas Educational Aide Exemption Program. This program was created to increase the number of paraprofessionals who receive certification in critical shortage areas such as mathematics, science, and special education.

### **Resource 9: Recruitment of paraeducators into the special education profession**

White, R. (2004). The recruitment of paraeducators into the special education profession: A review of progress, select evaluation outcomes and new initiatives. *Remedial and Special Education*, 25(4), 214–218.

The author details the University of North Carolina–Charlotte's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)-funded paraprofessional-to-teacher program. Of the 433 paraprofessionals who applied to the program from area local education agencies (LEAs), 165 were supported. Those without bachelor's degrees entered into an undergraduate special education program, while those with a bachelor's degree entered into initial licensure programs at the graduate level. Completion rates ranged from 58 percent to 76 percent, with 99 percent of program completers

being employed upon graduation. Also, of the initial 18 program completers in the first cohort in 1988, all were still employed at the writing of the article.

## **Strategy 4: Build Strong Partnerships With Institutions of Higher Education**

Partnerships with institutions of higher education (IHEs) provide special education teacher preparation departments the opportunity to create programs that meet the needs of the local area that they serve that, in turn, allows LEAs to recruit candidates that are prepared to meet their unique needs. By preparing candidates in collaboration, IHE faculty are provided genuine venues to conduct research while districts remain aware of current trends in the field. Given that two of the main contributors to the research-to-practice gap are teacher preparation and the conducting of research (McLesky & Billingsley, 2008), the creation of these partnerships shows promise to reduce the research-to-practice gap.

### **Resource 10: The University of Utah distance teacher education program**

Jameson, J. M., & McDonnell, J. (2007). Going the distance to train teachers for students with severe disabilities: The University of Utah distance teacher education program. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 26(2), 26–32.

This article describes the University of Utah’s Department of Special Education distance education program, which was implemented to address the need for highly qualified teachers in rural and remote areas. It provides information regarding the design, delivery, and required technology that the program has used in its multiple attempts to help rural districts meet the challenge of recruiting and retaining highly qualified special education teachers. It also describes lessons the department has learned from other distance education programs and from the various evolutions its own program.

### **Resource 11: Partnerships for dual preparation in elementary, secondary, and special education programs**

Jenkins, A. A., Pateman, B., & Black, R. S. (2002). Partnerships for dual preparation in elementary, secondary, and special education programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 23(6), 359–371.

This article describes a two-year program that prepared candidates in both special education and either elementary or secondary education. The University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) partnered with local schools that agreed to host a cohort of candidates for two years. Each school had to have an adequate supply of qualified general education and special education teachers to serve as mentors to the candidates. All 28 candidates from the 1996–1998 cohort graduated in May 1998.

### **Resource 12: School-university partnerships in special education field experiences**

Prater, M. A., & Sileo, T. W. (2002). School-university partnerships in special education field experiences. *Remedial and Special Education*, 23(6), 325–334.

This national descriptive study used a questionnaire to obtain information on school-university partnerships in special education field experiences. Specifically, they wanted information on the

degree of formality used between the schools and universities; roles and responsibilities of cooperating teachers and university supervisors; expectations of candidates and evaluation procedures; and the impact of existing school-university partnerships on preservice teacher placement.

### **Resource 13: Supporting the induction of special educators**

Boyer, L. (2005). Supporting the induction of special educators: Program descriptions of university-school partnerships. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 37(3), 44–51.

This article describes three IHE/LEA partnership programs that support the induction of new or aspiring special education teachers. Each program used different ways to analyze effectiveness. One program looked at candidates' satisfaction with the program; another used the number of candidates supported; while the last was interested in the number of candidates who became licensed in special education. The author also identifies important commonalities among the programs.

### **Resource 14: Personnel preparation partnerships**

Website: <http://www.personnelcenter.org/personnelprep.cfm>

This website contains information on how to develop partnerships to increase local community member access to personnel preparation programs. A research brief, PowerPoint, and examples of partnerships provide an overview of what is involved in the process. Available for download are key items such as a work plan that outlines roles, responsibilities, and timelines; plan forms for IHEs and LEAs; and an activity chart to track implementation. The site also includes the type of data needed to form effective partnerships.

## **Strategy 5: Increase Diversity and Cultural Competence in the Field**

An acute shortage exists of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) special education teachers (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005). Some researchers believe that increased diversity and cultural competence among the special education teacher workforce will result in increased student achievement for CLD students, as well as enhance the learning experience for white students. Evidence also shows that outreach to diverse populations is an effective way to recruit special education professionals (Rosenberg et al., 2007).

### **Resource 15: An internship model to recruit, train, and retain special educators for culturally diverse urban classrooms**

Andrews, L., Miller, N., Evans, S., & Smith, S. D. (2003). An internship model to recruit, train, and retain special educators for culturally diverse urban classrooms: A program description. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 26*(1), 74–78.

The authors discuss the Mild/Moderate Education Specialist Credential Internship Program at the University of San Francisco. This collaboration between the University of San Francisco and LEAs was created to recruit, train, and support Grades K–12 special education teachers to work in urban and multicultural settings. Over six years, the program recruited 97 candidates with 53 graduating and becoming fully certified. Among reasons for its success, the program cited the collaboration and teamwork that was modeled and the support provided by the university and district mentors.

### **Resource 16: Responding to special education teacher shortages in diverse urban settings**

Esposito M. C., & Lal, S. (2005). Responding to special education teacher shortages in diverse urban settings: An accelerated alternative credential program. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 28*(2), 100–103.

The authors provide information and outcome data on a partnership between California State University Dominguez Hills and four local school districts. A professional development school model was used to recruit and prepare in-service teachers to become special education teachers. This accelerated credential program prepared candidates to work in ethnic and linguistically diverse and economically disadvantaged settings. Of the 58 candidates who entered the program, 39 (66 percent) applied for preliminary credential, 8 (14 percent) applied for an intern credential, 9 (16 percent) were still enrolled.

### **Resource 17: Recruiting and supporting future special educators from underrepresented groups**

National Clearinghouse for the Professions in Special Education. (2003). *Enlarging the pool: How higher education partnerships are recruiting and supporting future special educators from under-represented groups*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved November 15, 2009, from <http://www.tqsource.org/issueforums/atrisk/resources/EnlargingthePool.pdf>

This document provides strategies for recruiting diverse candidates into special education teacher preparation programs. These strategies include (a) focusing efforts on members of the community; (b) developing programs teacher cadet programs for middle and high school students; (c) provide opportunities for Grades K–12 students to interact with students with a disability, special education teachers, and those majoring in special education; (d) conducting information sessions at high school career nights; (e) offering assistance to diverse and nontraditional candidates in applying to the program; (f) advertising OSEP-funded programs in schools with a large population of diverse students; (g) publicizing supports offered by the program for nontraditional and diverse candidates; (h) soliciting funds from local minority business owners to use towards tuition for diverse candidates; (i) creating state-supported financial aid programs for those majoring in special education; and (j) developing collaborative partnerships to identify and obtain funds. It also provides seven strategies on how to support diverse and nontraditional candidates once they are admitted to the program.

### **Resource 18: Shaping one traditional special educator preparation program toward more cultural competence**

Prater, M. A., Wilder, L. K., & Dyches, T. T. (2008). Shaping one traditional special educator preparation program toward more cultural competence. *Teaching Education, 19*(2), 137–151.

The authors provide information on their efforts to prepare a more culturally responsive special education teaching force by implementing a comprehensive strategy. The program details the evolution of their recruitment and retention efforts to increase the number of diverse candidates in their special education/English as a second language preparation program. They also discuss efforts used to improve faculty responses and sensitivity to cultural issues and how best to infuse cultural diversity throughout the special education teacher preparation program.

## **Strategy 6: Incorporate a Comprehensive Recruitment Strategy**

Relying on one strategy to address the shortage of special education teachers is a risky practice. Although a district will feel the positive effects of a successful strategy in just a year or two, an unsuccessful strategy can deepen the problem, leaving more students without services from qualified and effective special education teachers. Incorporating a comprehensive recruitment strategy allows districts to reach a wider range of candidates, which improves the chances of identifying and obtaining qualified special education teachers.

### **Resource 19: Teacher recruitment and retention for educational excellence**

Atwell, N. (2007). *Project TRREE: Teacher recruitment and retention for educational excellence*. Paper presented at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, New York, NY.

The author describes Project TRREE in Kentucky that was designed to recruit special education teachers. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education's OSEP-funded project, The Personnel Improvement Center, facilitated the development of a task force and the development of a comprehensive special education teacher recruitment plan with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse individuals. Details on the various strategies are provided along with recommendations for others seeking to implement a comprehensive recruitment plan.

### **Resource 20: The supply and demand for special education teachers**

McLeskey, J., Tyler, N. C., & Flippin, S. S. (2004). The supply and demand for special education teachers: A review of research regarding the chronic shortage of special education teachers. *Journal of Special Education*, 38(1), 5–21.

The authors discuss factors that influence the shortage of special education teachers and provide suggestions for future research. They also discuss comprehensive approaches that states have undertaken to address the shortage of special education teachers, including some that are mentioned here such as ARC programs and education assistance.

### **Resource 21: National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services**

Website: <http://specialedshortages.org/>

This site has data and information on the shortage of special education personnel and related service providers. Resources are given on advocacy, recruitment, and retention practices as well as state licensure requirements. Coalition partners such as the National Association of School Nurses, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and the American School Counselor Association provide descriptions of their career field and information relating to financial aid, scholarships, and grant opportunities. There also is information on the supply and demand of 11 categories of service and real-life accounts of how some are successfully addressing the personnel shortage.



## **Strategy 7: Implement Comprehensive Strategies to Retain Special Education Teachers**

A major reason for the special education teacher shortage is the high rate of attrition. Special education teachers leave the field or migrate to new positions at a high rate (McLesky & Billingsley, 2008). If schools are able to retain the special education teachers that they employ, there will be fewer vacancies and less of a demand to recruit new teachers. Therefore, focusing efforts solely on recruitment addresses only half of the problem. Implementing effective retention programs is an important part of the overall mission of establishing a qualified special education teaching workforce.

### **Resource 22: Bridges to Success: Supporting Early Career Special Educators**

Website: <http://www.tr.wou.edu/bridges/>

Western Oregon University, with the assistance of an OSEP-funded grant, created the Bridges to Success Model to support early career special education teachers. This model, which can be downloaded at no expense on the website, has three major sections: orientation, mentoring, and professional development. Each section provides guidelines on its development and offers resources and materials to assist in the process.

### **Resource 23: An induction program for special education teachers**

Kennedy, V., & Burstein, N. (2004). An induction program for special education teachers. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 27(4), 444–447. Retrieved November 15, 2009, from [http://www.monarchcenter.org/pdfs/Kennedy\\_2004.pdf](http://www.monarchcenter.org/pdfs/Kennedy_2004.pdf)

The authors describe the Beginning Teachers Support and Assessment–Special Education (BTSA-SE) program at California State University–Northridge (CSUN) and supported by the California Department of Education. One of the main goals of the BTSA-SE program was to retain special education teachers in urban areas by offering the following five components: (1) individualized support, (2) professional release days, (3) financial assistance to attend conferences, (4) ongoing professional development, and (5) providing a systematic assessment process that emphasized self-assessment and reflective practice. Outcomes from the program indicate that 95 percent of participants were still employed as special education teachers within the first three years.

### **Resource 24: *Increasing Teacher Retention to Facilitate the Equitable Distribution of Effective Teachers***

Lasagna, M. (2009). *Increasing teacher retention to facilitate the equitable distribution of effective teachers* (Key Issue). Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. Retrieved November 15, 2009, from [http://www.tqsource.org/publications/KeyIssue\\_TeacherRetention.pdf](http://www.tqsource.org/publications/KeyIssue_TeacherRetention.pdf)

This publication presents strategies, programs, and resources for improving the retention of teachers and promoting the equitable distribution of teachers. Strategies discussed include enhancing teacher induction and mentoring, improving working conditions, reforming teacher compensation systems, and providing advancement and leadership opportunities to teachers. It also includes four real-life examples of promising initiatives designed to stem teacher turnover.

## Real-Life Example

The University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee (UWM) and the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) developed an institute of higher education (IHE)/local education agency (LEA) partnership to recruit, train, and support new special education teachers. The UWM/MPS internship program provides postbaccalaureate special education certification in early childhood, middle childhood/early adolescence, and early adolescence/adolescence. Candidates in the UWM/MPS internship program are employed full time with the Milwaukee Public Schools while completing coursework. They receive a full teacher's salary and benefits. Candidates must commit to teach in MPS for the duration of the internship (two years without an education background and one year with an education background) and an additional three years upon completion of the internship.

To be considered for the Partnership program, potential candidates must hold a bachelor's degree and at least a 2.5 grade point average. The program requires candidates to complete an application, submit letters of recommendation, a resume, a personal statement, passing scores on the Pre Professional Skills Test (PPST), and participate in an interview. The program is especially interested in those who are passionate and committed to working with students with disabilities in Milwaukee Public Schools; show potential for effective collaboration; and exhibit strong academic potential. For full consideration, candidates must meet MPS hiring criteria.

Candidates are assigned a mentor that works full time for the internship program. During the first year, interns receive intense support from mentors. During the program's second year, mentors conduct monthly follow-ups with the interns. Mentors provide support by demonstrating teaching methods, assisting with the development of individualized education programs (IEPs), coteaching, and locating support materials. Mentors also assist interns in working with families and collaborating with other staff members. The program was first piloted in 1997–98 and was fully implemented in 1998–99. As of summer 2005, 111 candidates have completed the program and received Wisconsin special education certification.

For additional information, please refer to the *UWM/MPS Special Education Internship Program* website ([http://www4.uwm.edu/soe/departments/ex\\_ed/uwm\\_mps\\_spec\\_ed\\_internship/](http://www4.uwm.edu/soe/departments/ex_ed/uwm_mps_spec_ed_internship/)).

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