

**Strand Title:**  
**Recruiting, Developing, and  
Retaining Highly Qualified Special  
Education Teachers**

**Strand Leaders:**

Mary Brownell, University of Florida

Bonnie Billingsley, Virginia Tech

# Securing and Keeping Quality Special Education Teachers: Lessons From the Research

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[www.ncipp.org](http://www.ncipp.org)

Naomi Tyler, Vanderbilt University

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# Overview of This Session

- Teacher Quality
  - Mary Brownell, University of Florida
- Alternative teacher preparation & retention
  - Paul Sindelar, University of Florida
- Cultural & linguistic diversity in the special education teacher workforce
  - Naomi Tyler, Vanderbilt University
- Understanding & improving teacher retention
  - Bonnie Billingsley, Virginia Tech

# Tough Challenges

- Ensuring that students with disabilities make adequate yearly progress when state and federal budgets are dwindling
- Securing adequate numbers of highly qualified teachers in the face of chronic shortages
- Implementing effective preparation, induction, and retention strategies when states are fiscally strapped and the need for qualified teachers is enormous

# How Well are Students with Disabilities Doing?

- Students with LD have access, but are they doing well?
  - 65% of students with LD receive mostly whole group instruction
  - Participation rates in class activities are 50% less than those of general education peers
  - Accommodations they receive are questionable

# How Well are Students with Disabilities Doing?

- Students with LD have access, but are they doing well? (cont)
  - 30% to 60% of students with LD score as low on standardized achievement tests as 15 % of the typical population
- 75% of students with disabilities score below the 50th percentile
- Students living in poverty and those of color are most at-risk

SEELS and NLTS2 data bases (SRI International)

# Why Qualified Special and General Education: Teachers Matter!!!

- IDEA demands substantive access to the general education curriculum, not just the opportunity to participate
- NCLB and IDEA demand that students with disabilities make adequate yearly progress in the general education curriculum

What Kinds of Teachers Will We  
Need to Achieve these Objectives?

# What Do We Know about Quality Teachers

- Knowledge of Subject Matter
- Knowledge of Content Specific Pedagogy
- Strong classroom management skills
- Deep knowledge of the students
- Ability to respond to student needs

Brownell et al., in press; Brownell et al., 2007; Goldhaber; 2002; Hill et al. (in press) Rice, 2003; Seo et al., 2008; Seidel & Shavelson, 2007

# Why We Should be Concerned about Our Special Education Teachers?

- Special education teachers often do not have subject matter background, or more importantly, the content specific pedagogical knowledge to adequately serve students

# Need to Address Problems of Teacher Quantity & Quality

- ▶ Insufficient supply of special education teachers, especially those with content knowledge (Boe, analysis of SASS data)
- ▶ New teachers have insufficient knowledge and skills to meet the complex demands of teaching students with disabilities (Bishop et al., 2009; Seo et al., 2008)
- ▶ Turnover of special education teachers is high, especially in high poverty and remote rural schools (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008)
- ▶ Increasing numbers of students with disabilities compared to typical students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009)

How can we secure & retain a  
highly qualified and diverse  
special education teaching force?

# Program Designs Features That Improve Retention

Paul Sindelar

University of Florida

# Conventional Wisdom

- Alternative route programs are too short to prepare competent teachers
- Alternative route teachers are greater attrition risks
- Extensive preparation improves qualifications and preparedness

# Too Short?

- Rosenberg et al. (2007)
  - In a survey of 100+ alternative route programs, most were...
    - Offered by colleges and universities (> 75%)
    - Equivalent to on-campus degree programs (nearly 75% offer at least the option of obtaining a degree)
  - Very few programs were fast track (~11%)
- Sindelar, Daunic, & Rennells (2004)
  - AR program teachers were competent but in some ways less competent than graduates of traditional programs

# More Likely to Leave?

- Assertion seems to be based on (Darling-Hammond, 2000)
  - Compared UG programs, Holmes Group graduate programs, and Teach for America
  - Retention 3 years out: Holmes > UG > TFA (~33%)
  - But TFA entails only a 2-year obligation
  - What's surprising is that one third remained in teaching beyond their obligation

# Extensive Preparation?

- Finding from Boe, Shin, & Cook (2007)
  - Extensive preparation related to
    - Fully Certification
    - In-field Employment
    - Stronger Sense of Preparedness
  - Definition of “extensive preparation”
    - At least 5 weeks of student teaching and four TE components from SASS
      - Courses in selecting and adapting instructional materials, and educational psychology; observations of teaching; feedback
    - 10 or more weeks of student teaching

# Since We're All Doing It...

- How can we design programs to maximize probability of success?
- Who's likely to complete an AR program and remain in the field?
- Dai, Sindelar, Denslow, Dewey, and Rosenberg (2007)

# Whom to Recruit?

- Mid-career changers: Who are the best bets?
  - Paraprofessionals
    - Know a thing or two about the work
    - Trainers will know a thing or two about their potential
    - Opportunity to step up to professional status
    - Often live in the communities where they are employed
  - Other mid-career changers: Some are better suited for teaching than others, depending upon...
    - Previous careers
    - Experience with children
    - Salary change

# Program Design Considerations

- Location
  - Proximity to the schools at which the graduates will be expected to serve
- Income
  - Critical feature of “internship” AR programs: Opportunity to work during training
- Program Length and Requirements
  - Double-edged sword: Long and rigorous programs may discourage most qualified candidates

# Program Design Considerations

- Financial Assistance
  - Also a double-edged sword
    - Helps defray lost opportunity costs associated with training
    - However, when participants pay a share of the costs, they value preparation more and feel stronger commitment to the field

# Conclusions

- Still a lot we don't know about alternative route preparation
  - In spite of our beliefs about them...
- On the one hand, they're not all they're cracked up to be...
  - Negligible impact on SET shortages
  - Drawn individuals into the field who are more likely to be making more money teaching than less
  - They attract a more diverse participant pool, but only when they're located in diverse communities
- On the other, they're not all the streamlined, fast-tracks envisioned in NCLB

# Conclusions

Walsh & Jacobs, 2008

- Not “On the other hand,” but...
- *Because* they’re not all the streamlined, fast-tracks envisioned in NCLB



# Update: Diversifying the Special Education Workforce

Naomi Tyler

Vanderbilt University

# Why is it important to have a diverse special education workforce?

- Issues of equity and social justice
- Disproportionate representation
- Impact on student learning



# Equity and Social Justice

- “Our teachers should be excellent, and they should look like America.”

(Former

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, 1998)



# Demographics

	Students 2005-2006	Special education students 2005- 2006	Teachers 2003-2004
White	57.1	58.4	83.7
Hispanic	19.8	17.3	6.0
African American	17.2	20.6	7.4
Asian/PI	4.6	2.2	1.6
Native American	1.2	1.5	0.6

# Changes in the Workforce Diversity

	Teachers 1993-1994	Teachers 2003-2004	% change
White	87.3	83.7	-3.5
Hispanic	4.1	6.0	+1.9
African American	6.7	7.4	+0.7
Asian/PI	1.1	1.6	+0.5
Native American	0.7	0.6	+0.1

# Disproportionality

- Cultural mismatch in the classroom
- Potential impact on referrals for special education

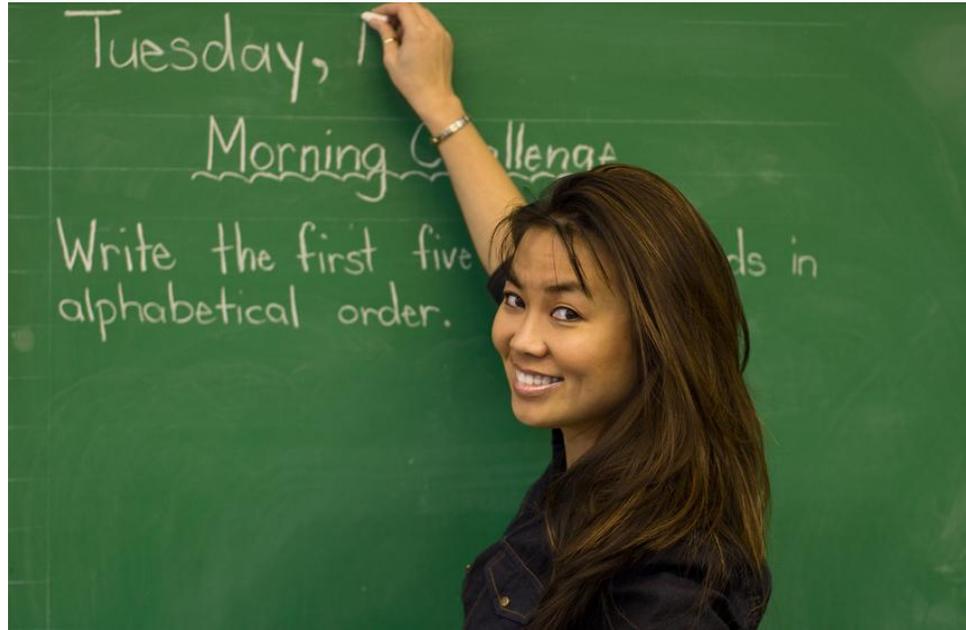


# Impact on Student Learning

Cultural translators/ mediators

Linguistic translators

Enhanced educational experiences for *all* students



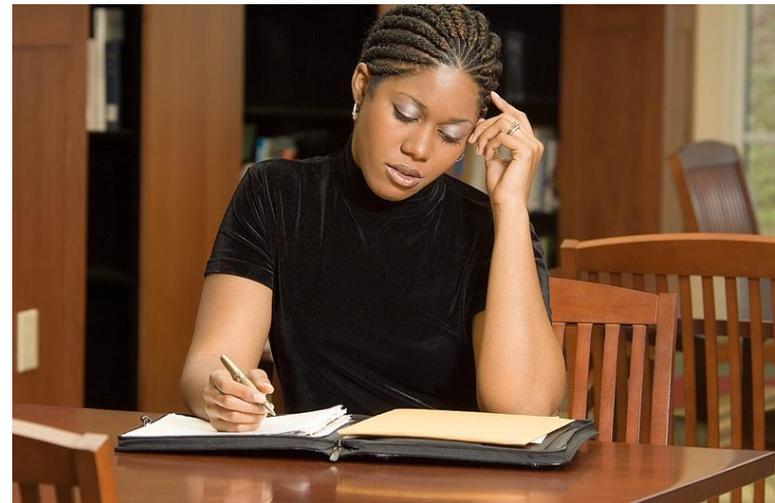
# Recruitment: Early support for students and families

- High-school course selection
- Future Teachers clubs
- College application/admission procedures
- Financial aid



# Recruitment: College selection

- Current students (word of mouth)
- Media campaigns
- On-campus activities
- Showcasing diversity



# Retention: College

- Mentors
- Cohorts
- Diverse faculty
- Cultural sensitivity



# All Teachers

Culturally sensitive

Culturally responsive instruction



# Understanding & Improving Special Education Teacher Retention: A Focus on Early Career Educators

Bonnie S. Billingsley, Professor  
Virginia Tech

# Purposes

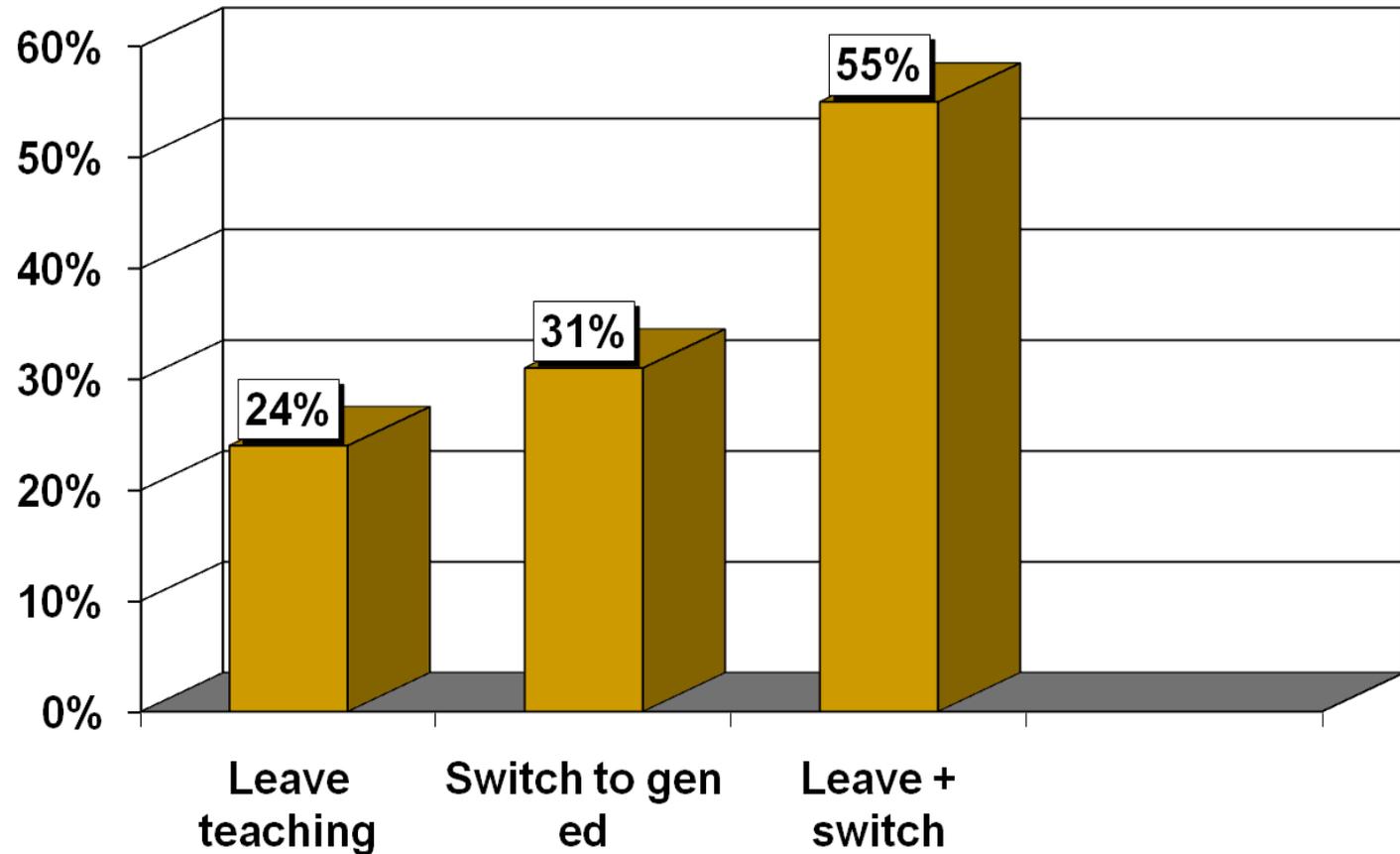
- Provide a framework for thinking about retention
- Identify four risk factors for early career teacher turnover & commitment
  - Relate these risk factors to high poverty schools
- Consider implications for retention

# Labor Market Theory of Supply & Demand\*

- ▶ Individuals will enter/remain if most attractive activity available
  - Overall compensation (broad idea)
    - “Sense of success” (Johnson, 2004)
    - “Intrinsic rewards” (Lortie, 1975)
- ▶ Adjust attractiveness of the job
- ▶ Elements of attractiveness become the policy levers to recruit & retain

\*Applied to teacher supply, demand and retention by Guarino et al., 2006

# 1. New Teachers at Risk of Leaving



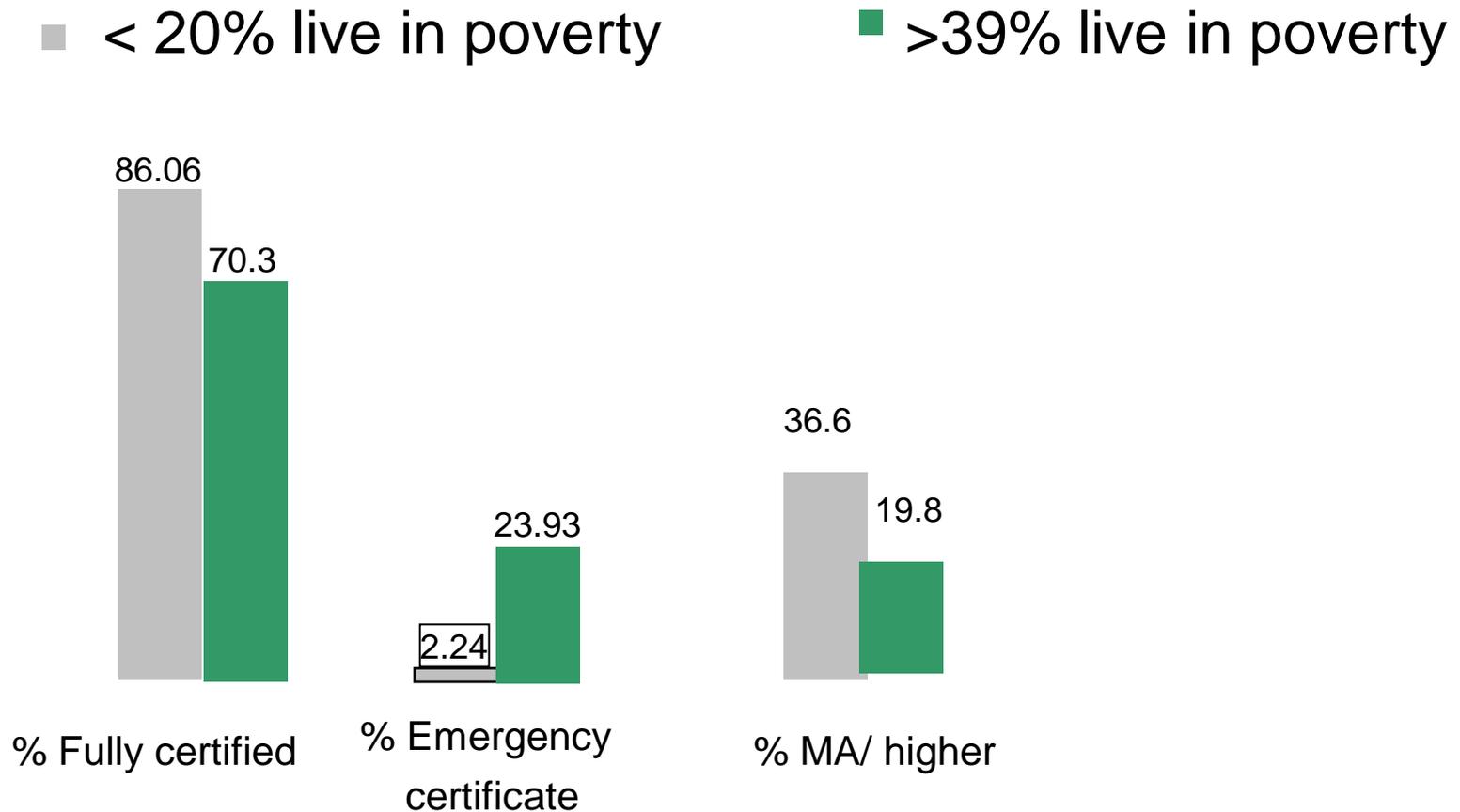
Boe, Cook & Sunderland, 2006

## 2. Less Preparation Linked to Leaving

- High percentages of unqualified early career SETs (Billingsley, 2002)
- “Attrition percentage for beginning teachers with little or no preparation was twice as high as for teachers with extensive preparation” (Boe, Cook & Sunderland, 2006)
- SETs who switch to GET have lesser qualifications (Boe, Cook & Sunderland, 2005)
- In special education lack of certification linked to leaving (Boe et al., 1999; Miller et al., 1999)

# Early career teachers in high poverty districts had fewer teaching credentials

(Fall & Billingsley, 2008)

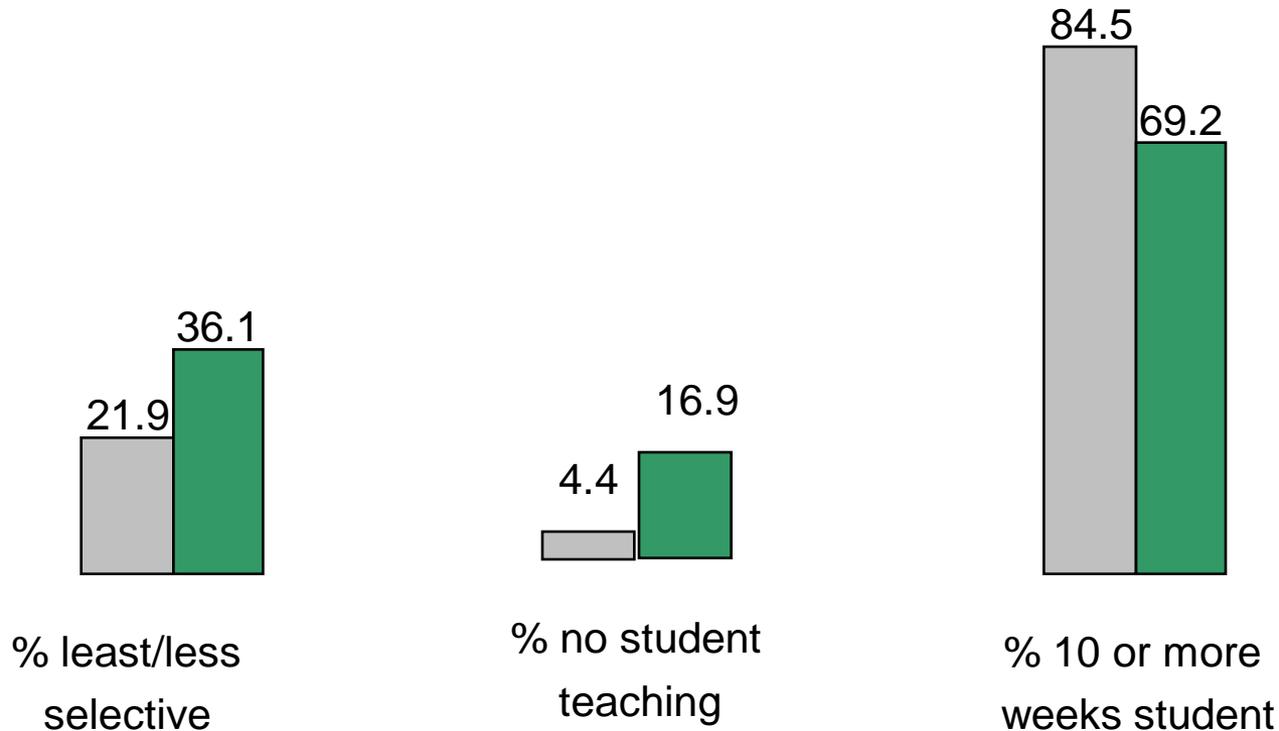


# Early career teachers in high poverty districts less prepared

(Fall & Billingsley, 2008)

■ < 20% live in poverty

■ > 39% live in poverty



# 3. Job Match

- Early career special educators who perceived a good match between preparation & assignments were more committed to their jobs (Fall, Billingsley & Williams, 2009)
- Teachers who were mismatched to their assignments left their jobs (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Morvant et al., 1995)

## 4. Work Conditions:

### Reasons Teachers Say They Exit Teaching

Boe, Cook & Sunderland, 2008

	<b>Special Educators</b>	<b>General Educators</b>
Escape teaching	37%	24%
Personal	32%	29%
Retirement	17%	29%
Professional development	8%	9%
Involuntary	7%	10%

# 4. Work Conditions & Commitment

(Fall, Billingsley & Williams, 2009)

- Controlled for teacher characteristics, preparation & district poverty level
- Three work factors related to early career teachers' commitment
  - School support
  - Teacher participation in decision-making
  - Work manageability
- District support was not significant

# Work Problems among Early Career Teachers

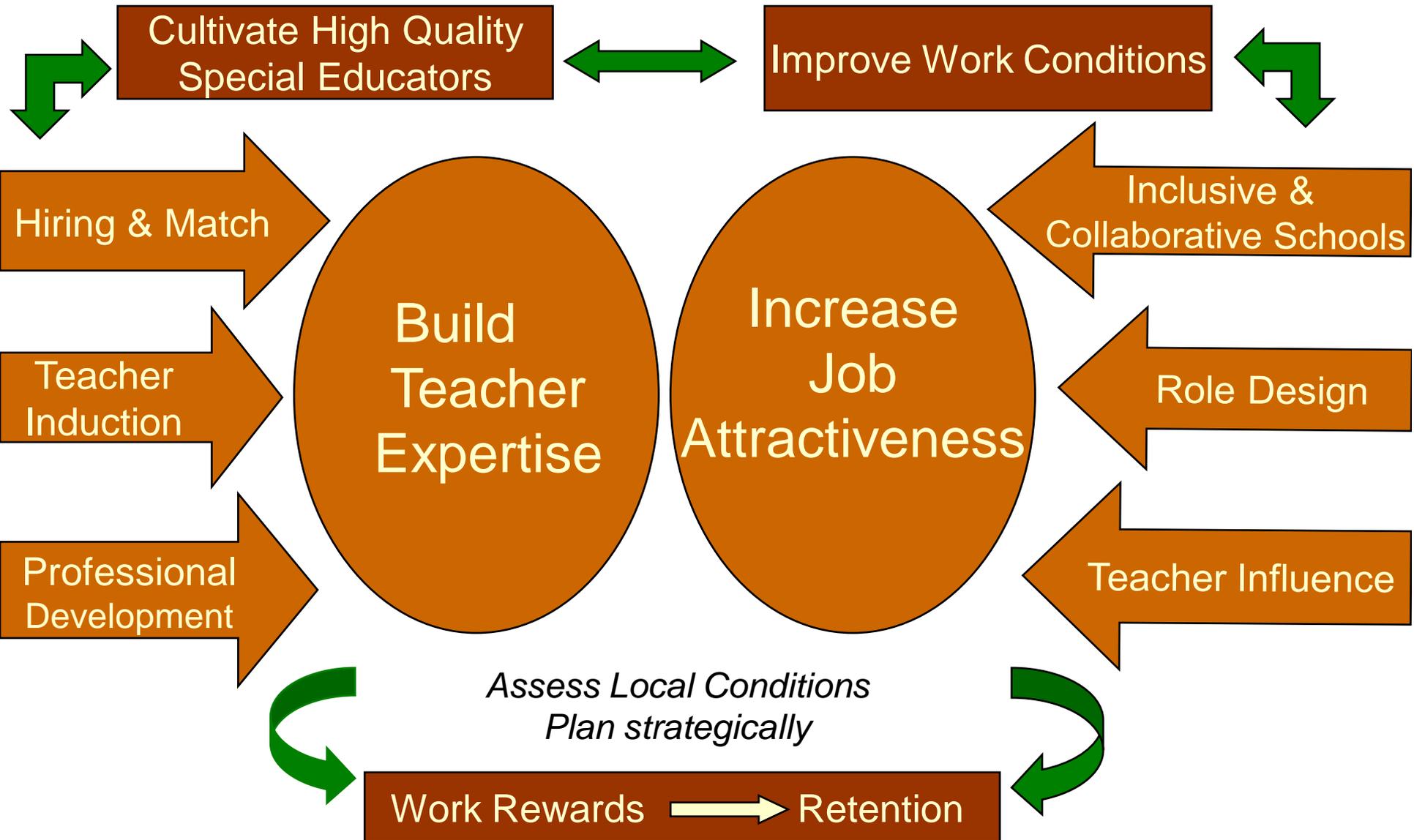
(Billingsley, Griffin et al. 2009)

- Inclusion, collaboration & interaction with adults
  - Sense of belonging
  - Resistance in collaboration
  - Lack of structural supports
- Pedagogical concerns
  - teaching content
  - Materials
- Organizing & managing work

# Work Conditions in High Poverty Districts

- When compared to teachers in low poverty districts, early career teachers in high poverty districts (Fall & Billingsley, in press):
  - Viewed their principals and colleagues as less supportive
  - Perceived less involvement in school decisions
  - Reported higher and more diverse caseloads
  - Indicated they had insufficient materials

**A Leader's Model for Cultivating & Keeping  
Committed Special Educators  
(Billingsley, 2005, revised)**



# Our Strand Continues...

(see page 98 of the program)

- 9:45 a.m. Building effective partnerships for recruiting, preparing and mentoring beginning special education teachers (Rosenberg, Gillespie, McCray & Kroeger)
- 11:00 a.m. Teacher induction and mentoring: What we know & steps for future success (Billingsley, Griffin & Kamman)
- 1:15 p.m. Using technology to prepare and mentor beginning special education teachers (Smith, Israel & Mike)
- 2:30 p.m. What helps beginning special education teachers learn to teach? (Kamman, Casey & Leko)
- 3:45 Hanging on to the good ones: Supporting and retaining high quality special education teachers (Banikowski, Fasulo, Mehring, Phillip, & Tines)