

# Teacher Induction in Special Education: Using What We Know to Inform Practice

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# Purposes of Presentation

- Framework for induction review
- Overview & critique of *special education* induction research base
- Major findings
- Conclusions & questions

# Framework for Literature Review

- Multiple meanings of induction (Feiman-Nemser et al. 1999)
  - Phase in Development
  - Teacher Socialization
  - Formal Induction Programs

# Overview of Induction Research

- Published literature 1992-2007
  - 30 published studies (included 5 dissertations)
  - Most conducted *prior* to 2000
  - One-half of the studies are “one-time” studies
- Nature of the studies
  - Most are descriptive, small studies
  - Several recent large scale surveys
- One prior literature review on induction programs (Griffin et al. 2003)

# Major Limitations of Induction Research

- Piecemeal & fragmented
- Lacking a conceptual base
- Little research about effects of induction
- Little differentiation among teacher groups:
  - Working in different service delivery models
  - Assigned to different exceptionality areas
  - With extensive vs. less extensive preparation
- Minimal discussion of the relationship of special and general education teacher induction

# Major Findings in Three Areas

- Induction as a phase
- Induction research
- Induction programs

# Induction as a Phase

- What is known about new special educators' experiences in schools?
- Literature base
  - 14 qualitative & 4 survey studies
  - Studies focused on teachers' concerns
  - Three major themes

# Inclusion, collaboration, & interactions with adults

- Special educators not feeling part of school
- School not supportive of inclusion
  - Lack of school-wide philosophy and structures
- Majority of new teachers reported problems in collaboration (e.g., resistance, proximity, schedules)
- Inadequate support in addressing concerns

*“Working at the edge”*

# Pedagogical concerns

- Curriculum
  - Struggled to teach & modify several content areas across multiple grades
  - Inadequate preparation in content subjects
  - Inadequate preparation to teach reading
- Lack of materials
- Managing student behavior

# Managing & organizing work

- Paperwork, IEPs & meetings
- Caseloads
- Time/Scheduling
- Role ambiguity

The best induction programs cannot compensate for constraining conditions such as problematic school cultures, inadequate resources, and unsupportive administrators (Feiman-Nemser, 2001)

# Research on Induction in Special Education

- ▣ Questions
  - What does the research tell us about induction and mentoring for beginning special educators?
- ▣ Database
  - 20 research studies since 1990
    - 12 peer-reviewed journal articles
    - 8 dissertations
- ▣ Research focus
  - Emphasizes mentoring vs. other components

# Focus of Studies

- ❑ Characteristics of special education mentors
- ❑ Other providers of support
- ❑ Formal and informal sources of support
- ❑ Frequency and proximity of support
- ❑ Content of support
- ❑ Assessment and evaluation

# Selected Findings

- Characteristics of special education mentors
  - Personal
    - Strong communication skills
    - Approachable
    - Available
    - Patient
  - Professional
    - Special education mentors
    - Mentors who teach same students and grade level(s)

# Selected Findings

- ▣ Other providers of support
  - Findings mixed
    - ▣ Administrators
      - Open-door policy
      - Willingness to support beginning special educators
    - ▣ General educators
      - Knowledge about supplies, schedules, routines, unwritten rules in the school, and effective teaching strategies
      - GEs not completely confident in their support role
      - Importance of supportive school community

# Selected Findings

- ▣ Formal and informal sources of support
  - Formal supports
    - Formal induction programs appear less helpful despite increases in participation
    - Formally scheduled meetings with mentors preferred
    - Formal classroom observations not standard practice
  - Informal supports
    - Informal assistance (impromptu meetings, unannounced classroom visits) helpful
  - Little evidence that teachers' intent to stay in special education is impacted by these supports

# Selected Findings

- ▣ Frequency and proximity of support
  - Frequency
    - ▣ Frequency with which various supports were provided was highly correlated with beginning special educators' perceived effectiveness of the supports
    - ▣ Frequency of assistance received is inadequate for addressing all professional and emotional needs
  - Proximity
    - ▣ Findings mixed
    - ▣ Preference for special education mentors over mentors in the same school

# Selected Findings

- ▣ Content of support
  - Emotional support
  - School and district information
  - Special education paperwork and procedures
    - ▣ IEP, IFSP, IDEA
  - Materials and other instructional resources
- ▣ Content needs
  - Content addressing beginning teachers' special education classroom assignments
  - Multi-cultural and diversity issues, supporting families, integrating IEP goals into the general education curriculum

# Selected Findings

- ▣ Assessment and evaluation
  - Few studies examined the purpose, characteristics, and implementation procedures associated with assessment and evaluation
    - ▣ Mentors serve in non-evaluative roles
    - ▣ Standards-based assessment and evaluation

# Spotlight: One Promising Program, Special School District

## St. Louis County, Missouri

- ❑ An induction program far beyond the minimum state requirements.
- ❑ SSD serves 28,000 students with special needs.
- ❑ In the 2008-2009 school year, SSD employs 2,778 teachers and 1,738 paraprofessionals in five special education schools and 23 partner districts.
- ❑ The primary goal of the SSD induction program is to retain efficacious teachers and increase student achievement.

# Academy I

- ▣ Academy I is the most intensive with three years of activities aimed at supporting the development of fundamental skills for all beginning special education teachers
  - Supports: orientation, professional development courses, school based mentor, district based instructional facilitator
  - Themes :
    - ▣ Year 1: *classroom supports for instruction*
    - ▣ Year 2: *effective teaching*
    - ▣ Year 3: *thoughtful teaching.*

# Academy I

	<b>Classroom Supports for Instruction, 1<sup>st</sup> year</b>	<b>Effective Teaching, 2<sup>nd</sup> year</b>	<b>Thoughtful Teaching, 3<sup>rd</sup> year</b>
<b>Instructional Days throughout year</b>	2 ½ days	3 days	3 days
<b>Skills Sets Focus Areas</b>	-Student behavior -Quality instruction	-Quality instruction -Student performance -Literacy and mathematics	-Quality instruction -Student performance -Literacy and mathematics
<b>Instructional Focus</b>	-Positive classroom environment -Universal classroom supports -Functional assessment components	-Process of quality instruction -Assessment, planning delivery -Reflection, evaluation	-Process of quality instruction -Assessment, planning delivery -Reflection, evaluation
<b>Mentoring Job-embedded support Peer-coaching</b>	<u>School-level mentors</u> Minimum 7 hours of mentoring 1 <sup>st</sup> semester, 3.5 second semester <u>Instructional Facilitator</u> Minimum 25 hours throughout year	Instructional facilitator -Coaching -Peer coaching	Instructional facilitator -Coaching -Peer coaching

**Table 5. Ashley's Mentor Support**

# Mentor-Mentee Experience

Mentors are the primary vehicle of beginning teacher support.

Ashley is a first year teacher employed by SSD and placed at a large elementary school. She teaches a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with autism.

<b>Ashley's School Based Mentor Support</b>	<b>Ashley's Instructional Facilitator Support</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● IEP procedures and paperwork ( e.g., goal writing, parent meetings)</li><li>● Special School District paperwork</li><li>● Home school procedures and policies</li><li>● Daily instructional problems and reflection</li><li>● Emotional</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Specific instructional strategies</li><li>● Linking instruction to student growth</li><li>● Dealing with continuous classroom problems</li><li>● Portfolio and skill set evidence</li><li>● Emotional</li></ul>

# Academy II & Research and Collaborative Phase

- Academy II
  - fourth and fifth year of teaching
  - improving the special educators' use of data to increase student achievement.
  
- Research and Collaborative Phase
  - sixth year and beyond
  - working collaboratively with their peers, supervisors, and partner districts
  - analyze student data and implement research strategies to meet student needs

# Outcome Data

- ❑ Majority of first year (91%) demonstrated evidence of using data to make instructional decisions.
- ❑ Impact of the mentoring component
  - establishing trust and rapport (94%)
  - opportunity for growth and learning (92%)
  - overall usefulness (92%)
  - improving instructional goals (80%)
- ❑ Reported retention rates, lowest rate of 74% was during the program's first year of implementation, 96% for 2007-2008.

# Induction Goals

Preparation & match

← Hiring?

“Sheltered” assignments

**Broad View of Induction**

Supportive school communities

**Relationship between general & special education induction?**

Responsive mentoring & professional development

← Technology?

# References

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